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THE CORNHILL



No. 972

AUTUMN 1947

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

Beneath a sky 'ironically blue,' during one of the most splendid and disastrous summers within the memory of the middle-aged, a new CORNHILL—the twelfth to appear since its revival—is being sent down to the printers. We, too, have had our disappointments. But, disciples of the school of *Candide*, as soon as it became clear that any hope of re-emerging as a monthly must for the moment be abandoned, we decided that, from one point of view at least, this temporary set-back might turn to our advantage: we could continue to be critically selective and need never feel that we were obliged to relax our standards because a certain number of valuable pages were waiting to be filled up. Thus, the present issue is devoid of fiction, no manuscript having materialised of which the individual quality struck us as sufficiently distinctive. On the other hand, we have been lucky in essayists, whose subjects range from the psychological basis of American foreign policy to the genius of Alain-Fournier, and have found room for a somewhat larger array of photographic plates than has been included in any previous CORNHILL. They illustrate, with their accompanying text, the history of the Middle East, the apocalyptic visions of John Martin and the domestic idylls of Fragonard (here discussed by Robin Ironside), a painter whose peculiar sensibility was an exquisite by-product of the age of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

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America and the World

A Psychological Survey

BY GEOFFREY GORER

The belief that Americanism can be more or less complete, and that such relative completeness is above all a matter of will, is a most important component in the attitude of most Americans towards the inhabitants of the rest of the world. Viewed from one aspect, all the people, and all the peoples, of the world can be placed at different positions along a single continuum, with one hundred per cent. Americanism at the positive end, and what might be called one hundred per cent. un-Americanism at the negative. Such a schematic concept is not, as far as I know, consciously formulated by any group in the United States ; but the speeches and actions of Americans of every political persuasion become far more comprehensible if they are interpreted in the light of such an unformulated scale. Full Americanism and full humanity are equated, and so peoples who are placed on the negative half of the continuum—as, for example, the Japanese during the last war—are denied human status and forfeit human rights. Until surrender and the consequent occupation transformed the Japanese into postulant Americans, Americans from the forces would recount to their approving compatriots tales of cruelty and deception practised on the Japanese soldiers which would almost certainly have evoked disapproval if animals had been involved instead.

For European peoples the criteria for approximation to Americanism are much the same as for European immigrants except that housing amenities and public services take on considerably more importance as indicative symptoms ; further criteria are the degree of technological development and political forms. Political forms are judged quite simply by their resemblance to or difference from American forms. Thus a republic is better than a monarchy, two parties are better than one, or three, the separation of Church and State is better than their amalgamation, a president is better than a king or a dictator, a separate judiciary is better than a subordinate judiciary, two houses of elected representatives are better than one or three, the absence of hereditary titles is better than their presence. To the degree that the political forms of a foreign country correspond to those of the United States, to that degree, other things being equal, is that country considered to approximate to Americanism. But, when this political aspect

is being considered, a synonym for Americanism is habitually used : the synonym is 'democracy.'

This synonym has been established by the simplest of syllogisms : American political forms are democratic, therefore political forms which are like those of America are like democracy. This syllogism is unquestioned by the overwhelming majority of Americans : were Sweden, or Greece, to abolish their monarchies without otherwise changing in any respect their political behaviour they would be considered to have become far more democratic by so doing. And conversely, no matter how complete the social security or the political equality of the British, they will be considered incompletely democratic while they retain the monarchy and hereditary titles.

For the vast majority of Americans the term 'democracy' has no connotations beyond 'political forms after the American fashion.' Those propagandists, paid or amateur, who wish to convince the American public that the political régimes of such countries as the U.S.S.R. or Yugoslavia are worthy of support do so by pointing out how much nearer their present forms are to the American model, compared with those they have replaced. Indeed partisans of all foreign countries use the same principle for commendation, telling Americans that the country they are advocating resembles, or aspires to resemble, America. This technique has probably been carried to its farthest pitch by naïve and well-meaning advocates of international co-operation like the late Wendell Willkie and Henry Wallace¹ who have claimed, with apparently no feeling of incongruity, that conditions in Siberia or in Yunnan are strictly parallel with those on the American frontier a century ago.

For those countries in which the people's appearance, clothes, food, housing amenities and political forms are completely different from those of Americans, above all the countries of Asia, the one means by which their inhabitants can be presented as tending towards Americanism, and therefore meriting treatment as human beings, is by describing their character as typically American. In recent years the Chinese have been the special recipients of this peculiar form of flattery ; judging by the majority of books and speeches on that country one would imagine that only the most superficial differences distinguished the valley of the Yang-tze from that of the Mississippi.² But though the Chinese are particularly

¹ See Wendell Willkie : *One World* (New York 1943), and various speeches by Henry Wallace, particularly those he made on his return from China in 1944.

² The chief impetus to this consideration of the Chinese as American characters with Oriental habits probably arose from the great popular success of the novels of Mrs. Pearl Buck. Her best-selling trilogy *House of Earth* (1931) portrayed the economic and social rise of a Chinese family, through the exercise of private

favoured in this respect, there is no country in Asia, no matter how hierarchic its structure, how absolute its government, how priest-ridden its people, how otherworldly its aims, which has not had its advocates explaining that its inhabitants are 'really' just like Americans.

If public sympathy for, or support of, a foreign people is desirable, it is essential that such an identification be made. Unless this minimum of Americanism is ascribed to them, how can they be considered human at all? And if they are not human, they are things: and things cannot be sympathised with or supported, they can only be exploited or destroyed.

It is in good part due to this widely held and basic attitude that foreigners are only worthy of respect and consideration insofar as they approximate to Americanism, that American advocates of international co-operation act as if they felt themselves forced to present a grossly distorted picture of the rest of the world to their compatriots. Apparently, to persuade Americans that war between their country and the U.S.S.R. would be disastrous, many 'liberals' feel it to be necessary to build a completely unrealistic picture of Russian society as practically identical with that of America except for a few technological developments; to admit that Soviet society is markedly different in form and in values from American society is wilfully to imperil the peace. As a consequence the 'liberal' newspapers and books of contemporary America, despite their undoubted good intentions, are in general far less accurate and trustworthy, as far as foreign affairs are concerned, than those which can rightly be dubbed 'conservative.' For the internationalists, far more than for the isolationists, the 'one-ness' of the world is a universal Americanism.

It is this attitude too which gives an idiosyncratic aspect to American co-operation in international undertakings. For most Americans, particularly in situations where the political aspect is not prominent, taking part in an international undertaking means extending American activities outside the boundaries of the United States. They will give their time, their skill, and their resources with great generosity and without afterthought; but it is most difficult for them to concede the desirability of forms of organization other than those they are used to, or to take into account values, preferences or prejudices which they have not encountered inside the United States. The belief in the universal aspiration towards

enterprise, and its subsequent disintegration in terms with which American readers could identify with the greatest of ease. The fact that the initial 'break' was a theft did not prevent this.

Americanism is so pervasive, that it is abandoned with the greatest difficulty ; and when circumstances force its abandonment, international co-operation is liable to be abandoned too. People so perverse as to choose to remain foreign deserve no help.

Men of good will can maintain for a long time their belief in the universal aspiration towards Americanism by stressing the distinction between peoples and their governments. With practically no exceptions, Americans regard their own government as alien ; they do not identify with it, do not consider themselves involved in its actions, feel free to criticise and despise it. This is most clearly demonstrated when Americans discuss American policies or activities abroad ; it is ' they ' who have made this policy, taken this move, written this note—never ' we.' This detached attitude is shared even by most members of Congress and the American civil service who are not personally involved in a given activity or foreign policy ; there is no feeling of joint responsibility or indirect participation.

This almost universal consideration of the government as alien and its personnel as tainted with the lust for authority and unworthy of respect has regular repercussions on American foreign policy. These attitudes affect the people who should devise and carry out the policies ; they realise they are suspect and are therefore exaggeratedly frightened of public criticism ; policies which officials are convinced would be desirable are not even mooted in public from fear of offending public opinion. Because the government is despised and suspect, Congress will only allow quite inadequate salaries to be paid to civil servants ; since the symbolic value of a high income is very great, and since being in government is a low-regarded profession, the more able civil servants are constantly being lured away by offers of better paid and more respected posts in business and the professions. This constant draining away of the more able people has as a first result a lack of continuity of personnel and so often a lack of continuity of policy ; a second result is that the people who resist the offers of business and remain in the State Department or Foreign Service tend to be people who do not fully share the general American attitudes towards authority ; and public suspicion of the State Department maintains that its personnel is unduly biased in favour of the two arch-symbols of authority—England and the Roman Catholic Church.

The general lack of identification with the government is most exaggerated among intellectuals. When they discuss foreign affairs the detachment becomes positively Olympian ; the rejection of any responsibility for, or participation in, the activities of their

own government, gives them, it would seem, special qualifications for telling other governments how they should act.

This distinction between peoples and their governments which Americans feel so intimately is regularly ascribed to foreign peoples with whom friendly relations are desired but whose political forms differ markedly from the American pattern. Thus, in face of all the available evidence, interested Americans insisted both during and after the recent war that the German people were predominantly hostile to national socialism and Hitler; and other interested groups are stressing with equal vehemence today the distinction between the 'common' Russian and his government. This belief can be maintained even after considerable personal contact with nationals of the relevant countries; for, since full Americanism and full humanity are equated, the more human foreigners are shown to be on further acquaintance, the more American they can be presumed to be in character.

Since Americans so regularly fail to identify with their own government, and since they generally ascribe a similar failure to identify to foreigners, American international relations tend to assume the same forms as American inter-personal relations. The diverse components which make up the relationships between Americans and their fellows are all present in the attitudes and demands of Americans in their relations with foreign peoples; since now one aspect, now another, comes to the fore, there is considerable apparent alternation and internal contradictions in the attitudes of Americans to a given country over a stretch of time.

One of the most important and constant components of such relations is the insatiable American demand for the signs of friendship and love. Part of my duties during the war was the reading of a large number of technical official descriptions, prepared by different American government agencies, of various remote countries and peoples in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. In every one of these reports, no matter how technical the greater part of the subject-matter, there was a paragraph on the attitudes of the natives towards the principal Occidental countries, and, in every case, these paragraphs stated that of all foreign countries America was the most loved, the most admired, the most trusted. It didn't matter how small and obscure the peoples were, how little experience they had had of Americans, or even, as in the case of some Micronesian islands, if they had had none at all within living memory, this paragraph asserting that the natives loved, admired and trusted America above all other countries had to find a place. To read of a people to whom such sentiments were not ascribed

would, it would appear, be as damaging to one's self-esteem as to be faced with an unsmiling shoe-shine boy or a silent bar-tender. In this context it is necessary to mention a non-symmetrical component of love in America : to be loved it is not necessary to love in return, but rather to be worthy of love. In the documents referred to there was no suggestion that this aboriginal love and admiration were reciprocated.

Love between peoples, strictly analogous to the love between individuals, is felt by many Americans to be of major importance in determining whether there shall be peace or war (or, at the very least, good or bad international relations) between America and the country under discussion. And so Americans of good will are constantly putting forward plans to assure world peace by bringing over large groups of individuals (usually students) from countries felt to be hostile to the United States. If twenty thousand Russians (for example) came over annually to spend two years in American colleges, they would return so filled with love and admiration that war between the two countries would be impossible. Sometimes these goodwill visits are envisaged on a reciprocal basis, though this is much less common ; America does not love Bulgaria (say) enough, because not enough Americans know enough Bulgarians ; if two hundred Americans go into as many Bulgarian homes, American-Bulgar relations will be perceptibly improved. But this symmetrical view is rare : generally it is thought that America will show herself worthy of love by good works—schools, hospitals, dispensaries, missions, technical 'know-how' ; the foreigners will give their love when their ignorance of America's worthiness has been dispelled.

This belief in love as a major factor in international relations has a number of consequences, of which the most important is the consistent underestimation of the 'impersonal' components of such relations, such as economic and ideological considerations. Secondly, this belief engenders an excessive sensitivity to the changing attitudes of foreign countries or those who are believed to be their representatives or spokesmen ; there are constant articles in the press rating America's popularity in different parts of the world, and a reported lessening of popularity is considered both a danger to peace and a personal rejection. It is therefore particularly difficult for America to carry through a long-term policy which demands initial unpopular measures. The 'tough' treatments originally proposed for the conquered populations of Germany and Japan made almost intolerably difficult psychological demands on the Americans designated to be the agents of those

policies ; to live surrounded by people who manifestly didn't love one, and whom one was forbidden to woo with gifts of food and cigarettes, with assistance and simple friendliness, with the nearest possible approach to ' dating,' would be too painful for well-adjusted Americans for any length of time. The non-fraternization orders showed as little understanding of American psychology as did the eighteenth amendment enforcing prohibition ; and, like that well-intentioned law, they were disobeyed with added zest. If Americans are placed in a situation where they feel they are not loved their natural tendency is to withdraw, physically if possible ; if that is not possible, then chemically, through alcohol, or ideologically, into isolation.

Coupled with this desire to be loved is a strong fear of rejection, of being treated as unworthy of love ; and one technique of dealing with this fear is to prevent it, by rejecting before one is rejected. This is one component making for isolationism in addition to the emotional rejection of Europe and the fear of losing the votes of local ethnic groups, a reproduction on an international scale of the response ' Let's get the hell out of here ' which is a well-worn individual technique for dealing with uncomfortable situations. Papers and propagandists who advocate isolationism as a consistent policy hope to win converts by reminding their readers and listeners how America has been rejected in the past, been called ' Uncle Sham ' or ' Uncle Shylock ' ; such past rejection is advanced as sufficient reason for avoiding rejection in the future.

This fear of rejection has, as it were, an obverse side—the fear of being exploited, of being made a sucker of, of not being truly loved for oneself alone but only for what one provides, the fear of being considered ' Uncle Santa.' This is the meanest, as well as one of the most prevalent American fears, and the one most likely to damage international relations, now that America is the universal creditor. Coupled with this fear of being ' had,' there are nearly always statements about American inferiority in international dealings ; foreign countries are too cunning, too persuasive in their propaganda, too apt at flattering the naïve American representatives for it to be safe for America to treat with them. In this picture, which is the one predominantly presented by the isolationist press, the feminine identification of America is almost undisguised : America is pictured as the naïve and beautiful farmer's daughter, whose simple virtue is in constant danger from the wicked fascinations of the city slickers. In such cases the desire to be loved is overpowered by the fear of being seduced and abandoned.

The demand for love, and the hurt pain when love is refused,

colour many American responses to international situations. Thus, a very important component in the current general attitudes towards Soviet Russia and Yugoslavia springs from what is felt to be the ingratitude of these countries in the face of American benevolence. America gave Lend-Lease supplies, voted the greater part of the money for UNRRA, which did much for the victory and rehabilitation of these countries. Instead of receiving thanks and love, the American representative in Moscow had to extort a grudging acknowledgment of the gifts, the Russian newspapers were, and are, filled with abuse of their benefactor, the Yugoslavs shot down their planes. Benevolence earned, not love, but abuse and rejection; each such experience gives added weight to the argument of the isolationists and weakens the advocates of international co-operation.

The demand for the signs of friendship and love is only one of the components of the relations between Americans. A second is the competition for relative success. In the international sphere, however, the analogy is less the competition between individuals than the competition between business concerns, at least in the minds of those directly or indirectly involved in international economic transactions. America is, as it were, envisaged as a large corporation engaged in an endless competition for markets and profits with the other corporations who are the remaining national states of the world. In such dealings any considerations other than the expansion and profit of one's own corporation are irrelevant. The rules governing such commercial competition should ideally be those of unrestricted 'free enterprise'; if these are, regrettably, modified, every effort must be made to see that your competitors do not gain an unfair advantage over you. It is unfair if they pay their workers less than you do, and such discrepancies should be made good by tariffs; it is unfair if two of your competitors enter into a mutual contract from which you are excluded, and attempts are made to prevent this by the international equivalents of anti-trust laws; it is unfair if foreign corporations try to invade your territory, and it is equally unfair if foreign corporations try to exclude you from their territory. As a business concern, a corporation's sole object and justification is to show increasing and continuous profits for its share-holders (or citizens); it should buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; if in the course of these transactions other firms go bankrupt and cannot continue in business, what concern is it of ours? What do you think we're in this for? Our health?

The parallel between the national state as an economic unit and

the private trading corporation is pushed as far as it will go by the 'hard-headed' American business man, often with results which threaten world disaster. Within a single economy it is possible to drive competitors into bankruptcy and ruin without affecting in any way the stability of the economy as a whole, whatever individual misery may be caused; but a bankrupt state cannot be similarly absorbed. In the business world no quarter is given, and none is asked, and it is generally believed that the community as a whole is benefited thereby. No similar claim can rightly be made when such behaviour is projected onto the world scene. But when a situation is defined as 'business' an American cannot act with self-approval, much less receive the approval and consent of his fellows, unless he follows the principles which hold good for private trading. 'The business of America is business.'

Political alliances are envisaged as similar to combinations between corporations in which two (or more) companies will pool their resources and co-ordinate their policies to dispose of a rival. Once the rival has been disposed of, the association, which was strictly *ad hoc*, is automatically at an end; both have been benefited by the removal of the rival from the field, and now can revert to mutual competition under the rules of free enterprise which is the proper normal state of healthy corporations. Since the shared activity was mutually profitable it entails no further obligations on the formerly contracted parties.

The violent contrasts between Americans acting as hard-headed business men and as kind simple guys who just want to be liked are the cause of the greatest amount of the confusion and distrust with which the foreign activities of the United States are viewed by non-Americans. Americans are generally not conscious of the contrast because they tend to view each situation separately, as it were atomically; if a situation is defined as one of business, one type of conduct is appropriate; if defined as one of human relations, a quite different type of conduct is called for, just as you treat a business rival differently in his office or at the country club. The drawback to this analogy in international relations is that non-Americans seldom share this custom of defining appropriate behaviour in terms of the immediate context only, and may well give different definitions to the situations from those adopted by Americans.

A further cause of confusion is that Americans not only switch continuously from the rôle of the business man to the rôle of the kind simple guy, they also speak sometimes with the voice of Uncle Sam, sometimes with that of the Goddess of Liberty. The Goddess

of Liberty speaks in terms of moral imperatives and prohibitions ; she tells the world what it should do and should not do, when it should fight and when it should kiss and make up, when it should give some of its candy to the other children, and when it should stand up for itself and not let itself be put upon. The Goddess of Liberty lays down these rules of conduct for others with complacent assurance that she is right, but she does not feel they apply to herself ; a mother or schoolmistress is not supposed to act in the same way as the boys she is rearing. To people who have not been reared in the same way it is often disconcerting when the voice of the schoolmistress comes out of the mouth of a senator or newspaper columnist ; and those who do not envisage Morality as a Goddess, debarred by her status from taking part in many of the activities she prescribes, mistakenly interpret such injunctions as hypocritical.

The attitudes so far discussed are those of the general run of Americans with no deep emotional involvement with any particular foreign country. There is, however, also an important minority of Americans who become emotionally most deeply involved with specific foreign countries. Such involvement would appear to be due to variations of individual history or personality, and to take two main forms.

The first of these consists in the subvention of revolutions abroad. Many of the revolutions of this century, particularly those aiming at the establishment of the political independence of peoples formerly dependent, have been made possible in great part by American gifts of money. The cases of Czechoslovakia and Ireland are well-established examples ; traces of similar activities can be seen in the present situations in Palestine, Poland and Greece. It has been suggested to me that these activities are supported predominantly by second-generation Americans whose fathers came from the countries concerned, and the gifts are attempts to atone for the rejection of their fathers and their countries, countries which in most cases they have no desire to visit, and whose tongue they are unable to speak. It is ironical that citizens of a country so politically conservative and so apprehensive of domestic revolution that any proposed change can be damned in the eyes of the majority by labelling it ' communist ' should so often be the mainsprings of revolution and terrorism abroad.

Other Americans, with no such genealogical connections with specific foreign countries, also become deeply involved in the fortunes of particular countries, or of political parties therein. These would appear to be people whose emotional needs do not

find sufficient scope in their immediate environment and who search the world for a larger screen on which to project their feelings of oppression and injustice, of being insufficiently loved and respected. In this case there are nearly always two concomitant psychological features: the individual Americans identify very deeply with the inhabitants of the country they are interested in, and they become fiercely partisan. This partisanship overrides all other considerations; Americans who have chosen Poland, or Yugoslavia, or China (to take current examples) on which to project their own unconscious hopes or fears, will only accept news or countenance policies which favour the group they have chosen; even within the government it is rare to find an American whose first consideration is the interest of the United States in regard to (say) Yugoslavia or China; they are for or against Marshal Tito, for or against Chiang Kai-Chek; they try to influence public opinion and the actions of the United States government in favour of the side they have adopted, and to persuade the indifferent world that morality and democracy are served thereby. The interest of their own country is rarely considered by such passionate partisans; the normal American failure to identify with the government is in such people enhanced, until the American government becomes an enemy to be tricked and outwitted in favour of a party in a foreign country which its proponents may well have never visited and of whom all their knowledge is second- or third-hand.

When normally well-adjusted Americans are made aware of the political situation in any foreign country their habitual reaction is to divide the inhabitants into oppressors and oppressed, and side with the latter. The rejection of authority is so fundamental that the belief that another group is trying to reject authority is a sure ground for sympathy and for a minimum of identification, however inhuman the 'under-dogs' may be in all other respects. The general American concern about India (and to a certain extent all dependent peoples outside the western hemisphere) is founded on the 'American' and 'democratic' implications of resistance to authority. To be against authority is to be worthy of sympathy and help. Emotionally, India in recent years is seen as parallel to America in 1775; outside the realm of emotion the parallel is nearly meaningless. But for most Americans the internal affairs of other countries are only of interest from the emotional point of view; spontaneously and generously, though often unthinkingly and irrationally, they take the part of the under-dog as their own.

To maintain this identification the 'under-dogs' must stand up for themselves; 'under-dogs' who appear to acquiesce in their

position quickly arouse American discomfort and eventually rejection.

In the case of the passionate partisans this typical American attitude is frequently reversed, and the powerful and authoritarian are identified with because they are powerful and authoritarian, because through them the partisan can vicariously gratify desires which cannot be gratified directly within the political framework of the United States. This attitude was most clearly crystallized in Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Wave of the Future* of which the fundamental argument was that Americans should give support to National Socialism and Fascism because they were powerful, and were going to become more powerful. Identical arguments (though the terms are changed) are advanced for supporting Soviet Russia today. Inside America the hoped-for material benefits of communism, so potent in Europe, have little appeal, for the present system has given most Americans far more materially than communism promises; but the lure of Soviet power has an insidious appeal for those who are humiliated by their own weakness or frustrated by their own inner insecurities. The ethical exoteric programme of communism provides a veneer of respectability for the advocates of Soviet Russia which was lacking in the case of Nazi Germany; but, in a surprising number of cases, the partisans are identical.

Apart from these furtive worshippers of power, American partisanship is most generally manifested towards Asiatic countries, and political groups therein. The attitude of the majority of educated Americans towards Asia is different in kind and degree from their attitudes towards the rest of the world. Asia is the one continent about which Americans are emotionally detached. Europe is the repudiated and rejected land of their forefathers; the physical appearance of the Africans revives feelings of guilt and distaste; Latin America is a sort of despised strategic hinterland, to be protected from European encroachments, faintly ridiculous with its endless political upheavals, backward and unsanitary even if picturesque, inhabited by amorous, lazy and untrustworthy 'Latins' whom it is politic to patronize but impossible to admire.

With the intermittent exception of Japan, Asiatics are more separate from Americans, both physically and emotionally, than any other peoples. An Asiatic appearance evokes far fewer memories than does a Caucasian or Negroid; Asiatics are not threatening (they are physically smaller) nor are they distasteful parodies. They are most of them politically oppressed and can therefore be sympathised and identified with as under-dogs, as well

as providing vicarious atonement for the treatment of the American Negroes; and an American hostility to the government can generally be imputed to those whose government is not alien.

A kindly and generally unpatronising interest in Asiatics is therefore felt by most educated Americans, manifested in the generous support given to medical and religious missionaries, and by other tangible and material aids; politically Americans like to think of themselves as patrons and protectors of the peoples of Asia against the depredations and exploitations of the rest of the world. This is the general attitude; but in a considerable number of individual cases identification with the fortunes of some Asiatic political group is carried up to and beyond fanaticism.

The American partisans of Asiatics from Haifa to Hong Kong are above all things dedicated to freeing their adopted peoples from the depredations and exploitations of the British. For the majority of Americans there only exists one empire in the world, the British Empire. Although specialists in the region are intellectually aware that France and the Netherlands control (or controlled till recently) considerable populations in Asia, this is a fact of little emotional importance, and it would be hard to find passionate American advocates of any long standing for the independence of French Indo-China or the Dutch East Indies. The existence of the American Empire is simply denied emotionally and intellectually, and few well-informed Americans could make even a rough estimate of its population, a moderately complete list of the 'Dependencies' and 'Possessions' of which it is composed, or say how any portions of it are governed. If pressed, they would probably (and incorrectly) assume that it was governed democratically;¹ but few Americans have any doubt as to how the British Empire is run; it is run completely despotically and autocratically, the exemplar of authority at its most unbridled and arbitrary.

This belief in the unparalleled iniquity of the British Empire is held unquestioningly by the vast majority of Americans, even by those who admire and love England. The picture is painted in the history books from the first grade onwards; the British Empire of 1947 is conceived as an unmodified extension of the British Empire of 1775, of George the Third and Lord North. The moral of the text-books is never seriously questioned; the British Empire

¹ Except for the Philippines, no portion of the American Empire elects the representatives who frame the laws and impose the taxes. The Empire is administered in part by the Department of the Interior (!) and in part by the Navy Department. The populations dependent on the latter enjoy the minimum of civil rights.

is evil and oppressive, and anybody helping to weaken or overthrow it is helping the cause of democracy, truth and justice. The fact that victory over Japan was completely dependent on British and Empire bases has only been realised by a few professional strategists ; whatever the longer term consequences American opinion can always be split by calling attention to the existence of the Empire.

The unique wickedness of the Empire is one of the components in the complex of American attitudes towards Britain. Together with this wanton authority there often goes a belief in the unparalleled cunning, unscrupulousness, deviousness, subtlety of propaganda and general Machiavellism of the British which, on suitable ground, can produce fine full-blown paranoid constructions. Even in well-balanced Americans these beliefs are latent ; and in Washington I was often surprised at the ingenious and subtle explanations devised by my American colleagues for our blunders and stupidities ; they found it as difficult to believe that we could be inefficient on a political level as to credit us with efficiency on a mechanical one.¹

Although the attributes commonly ascribed to the British are morally deplorable, they cannot be treated with the indifference suitable to the morally deplorable attributes of continental Europeans. For one thing, they imply a sort of superiority, which even if disapproved of, offers a challenge of a different nature to European immoralities. But more important is the fact that most Americans share with most Englishmen the belief that the United States has been predominantly peopled by British stock.

This is a purely mythical belief. Before the Revolution the English and their descendants were the largest group in the country and at that period they held all the chief positions of power and influence ; the Founding Fathers were predominantly English in education and character. But since the great immigrations which started in 1870 the English have become a relatively unimportant

¹ Since Britain is defined as old-fashioned, there is a very general unconscious tendency to deny the British any mechanical or inventive ability. Although such action is almost certainly not concerted, there is an almost universal tendency on the part of American journalists and broadcasters first of all to slur over the British contribution to any invention or novelty when it is first announced, and in a very short time to treat the invention or novelty as American. Striking recent examples are radar, penicillin, and jet-propelled planes (though perhaps Germany merits priority in the last instance). Few Americans could be found to question that these were all American discoveries.

Another very prevalent misconception about Britain on the part of Americans is the size of its population. The general belief is that it is only slightly smaller than that of the United States. I have found that even authoritative political commentators believe that the population of the British Isles is somewhere between eighty and a hundred million.

component in the amalgam of the Melting Pot. Owing to inter-marriage it is impossible to calculate with any accuracy the proportions in which the various European stocks are represented among contemporary Americans ; but intelligent guesses estimate that the descendants of the Irish or of the Germans both approximate in number to the descendants of the English, and together outnumber the latter, without taking into account the descendants of all other European stocks ; the descendants of the English are at most the largest single minority within the country.

Though a belief may be unfounded in historical fact, it can nevertheless be psychologically potent ; and the general American belief that most other Americans are descended from the English has had an important influence on American attitudes towards England.

The upper class along the Atlantic seaboard place great emphasis on their English ancestry, which is their chief claim for social superiority ; as a consequence the English are to a large extent identified as upper class, and receive much of the resentment which cannot be so safely directed at the socially prominent. This belief is kept vivid by the stereotyped picture of the Englishman in radio, film and cartoon (the titled, monocled, tea-drinking, haw-hawing nitwit who aspires to, and often succeeds in marrying the rich heiress) ; by the great emphasis given to the British Royal Family in all the press, and to the existence of the aristocracy in the isolationist papers ; and by the fact that visiting Englishmen tend to appear prominently and consistently in the 'Society' pages of local newspapers. Even through its casual visitors, England tends to be identified with authority.

Most Americans feel towards Britain as though it were a father—authoritarian, wicked, past its prime, old-fashioned, passed and left behind, but still a father ; they can never be indifferent to Britain as they can be to the rest of the world. They are more sensitive towards Britain, more conscious of its faults and failings, than they are in the case of any other country, just as one is more sensitive to the public behaviour of relations than to that of strangers. Many have an ideal of the line of conduct which Britain should pursue which is far higher than that demanded of any other people, or of themselves ; that too is compatible with the image. Until recently, and for many Americans even today, there have been no limits imagined to England's strength ; refusal to take aggressive action, whether in Manchuria or at Munich, has consistently been ascribed to wickedness, never to weakness ; England could right what was wrong with the rest of the world, and its refusal to do so was perverse. Even the British demand for

a loan, following its impoverishment through the war, was felt to be like an improvident father in his old age demanding support from his despised but capable son ; and the loan was granted with that mixture of revenge and annoyance which would be appropriate in such family circumstances. In 1843 Dickens heard England referred to as that 'unnat'ral old parent' ; a century has not fundamentally changed the attitude.

In one way England may be said to be part of the American character : it is the one aspect of the father which has not been completely rejected. In nearly every individual case the actual fathers have been rejected, together with the countries from which they came ; there are few father-figures on the internal scene and those are feared and resented ; but on the fringe of consciousness there remains England as an image of a father, hated and loved, feared and admired, resented and copied, mistrusted and looked up to, regarded with a sensitive ambivalence which can never sink to indifference.

[This essay forms part of a longer study on the modern American character.]

Assassins of Syria

BY FREYA STARK

The Orontes, which the Arabs call the Rebellious Stream, winds in a marshy maze at the bottom of one of the world's most beautiful and most unhealthy valleys, from its headwaters near Baalbek, to its mouth in the Antioch bay. The wildest country of Syria comes rolling down to it in hills only a little less steep than walls. On the easier slopes at their feet are the villages; and below, among swamps and fords known only to the local smugglers, the Orontes winds in curves and knots of silver, feeding rich harvests which for age after age bury cities that wars or malaria have killed. The ploughmen make furrows a mile long in the dark flat loam; the houseless Kurds lean their black shallow tents in grassy patches against some mound of human history long past, and there in the middle of the valley, proud and ruined, is Apamea, already in the twelfth century 'a place where horses cannot move freely because of the stones and the columns and the foundations of ruined walls.'

South of it and in sight, on a ridge like a crocodile's back, is Shaizar bridge and castle that hold the Orontes crossing for Homs and Hama and Aleppo—Gisturn the Crusading chronicles call it from the Arabic *gisr* or bridge. Here the Arab knight, Usama ibn Munqidh, recorded his memories of the early years of the twelfth century, when Tancred and Roger and Bohemond harried the lands of Shaizar and in the general unrest and turmoil the secret sects of Assassins and Druses were forming in the refuges of the hills.

No one can paint the Syria in which they flourished so vividly as the old Lord of Shaizar. Here is everyday life as seen from the castle windows:

'The men of Antioch came down upon us in those days [about A.D. 1129] by their usual route; and we rode out facing them, and the river [Orontes] between us . . . and they pitched their tents and camped, and we returned and camped in our land, and we saw them from the castle and about 20 horsemen of ours rode out to . . . a village near Shaizar to put their horses to grass, and left their lances at home. Then two knights rode out from among the Franks and approached those horsemen . . . and lo, by chance, they met along the track a man driving an animal and they took

him and his beast, and we watched from the castle. Our horsemen mounted but stood, for they had no lances; and my uncle said: "There are twenty of them and they don't rescue one man with two riders! If Jum'a were there you would see what he would do." As he spoke, Jum'a appeared fully armed cantering towards them. And my uncle said: "See what he does," and when he drew near the two riders, and while cantering, he turned his horse's head and came up behind them out of sight. When my uncle at his balcony in the castle saw him stop, he came in from the balcony in anger and said: "This is a coward!" But Jum'a had halted because of a ditch that ran in front of the two riders, fearing there might be an ambush, and when he reached it and saw that there was no one inside, he charged the two knights and freed the peasant and his animal and drove them to our tents. And Bohemond the Lord of Antioch saw what happened, and when the two knights returned he sent for their shields and used them as mangers for the horses . . . and called them not men but women.'

So much could be seen from the walls of Shaizar where now you look out only on the waving of the corn (for it is still a district unsafe because of smugglers, but they go by night). Lions too have now disappeared, though they seem to have been plentiful then.

'Pedrovant [a Frank] was travelling . . . from Apamea on some business of his to Antioch. And a lion came out upon him from a thicket in the woods along the road and tore him from his mule and entered with him into the thicket and ate him, may God *not* have mercy upon him.'

This is only one of several gruesome incidents.

But there were many pleasanter episodes in the border life and a lot of intercourse in intervals of truce between Muslim and Crusader.

'I was in Damascus at this time, and I told the King [of Jerusalem] Fulk the son of Fulk that the Lord of Banias had injured us and taken our flocks, at the time when the ewes drop their young. They dropped their lambs and they died and he sent them back to us after he had destroyed them. And the King said to six or seven of his knights: "Go and give a judgement for him." They left his audience hall and went away and consulted alone among themselves, until they were all agreed and returned to the King's audience. And they said: "We have judged that the Lord of Banias owes a fine for the flocks which he destroyed." And the King ordered the fine. And he, the Lord of Banias, supplicated and importuned me and asked me until I took 400

dinars from him. For this judgement, when the knights have given it, cannot be altered or broken by the King himself or any of the great ones among the Franks.'

An interesting study could be made on the friendly relations between Arabs and Crusaders. Usama, during his first battle as a young lad at Apamea, saw a knight 'on a black horse like a camel with breastplate and chainmail for war'. He feared that he might not be strong enough to take him on, until he noticed that the knight was spurring his horse. Then he knew him to be afraid and went for him so that 'my spear came out about a cubit in front of him, and I was lifted from my saddle by the lightness of my body and the strength of the thrust and the swiftness of my horse. But I got back and pulled in my spear and thought I had killed him.' A few days later Usama was sent for by his uncle in Shaizar, and found him with a Frankish stranger, a knight who had come from Apamea to see the horseman who tilted at Philip. For the Franks were astonished by the thrust, which twice pierced the coat of mail and spared the knight. Usama goes on to explain that one must be careful, in thrusting, to hold the hand and arm and spear close to one's side and hold the horse lightly; for if the hand moves, the spear-thrust is weakened.

Another young Frank comes to Shaizar with a letter from Tancred, the prince of Antioch, asking that he may stay awhile with the Muslims to see their ways before returning from his fighting pilgrimage to Europe.

In the far corners of the Crusading world, where Europeans were remote and comparatively thinly scattered, this intercourse must have been even more general. There is a pleasant scene on the banks of the Euphrates between Najm ad-Daula Malik, lord of castle Ja'bar near Raqqa, and Jocelyn, lord of Tell Bashir, who came raiding 'and plundered and drove off many flocks and camped opposite the castle, with the river Euphrates separating them. And Najm ad-Daula Malik got into a small boat with three or four of his lads and crossed the Euphrates to Jocelyn, for there was an old acquaintance between them. . . . Jocelyn thought it was a messenger. . . . But one of the Franks went up and said: "That is Malik in the boat." He answered: "It isn't true." And another came up and said: "Malik has got out of the boat and is walking up." And Jocelyn rose and went to meet him, and did him honour, and gave back all his plunder. And if it had not been for Najm ad-Daula's prudence, his country would have been ravaged.'

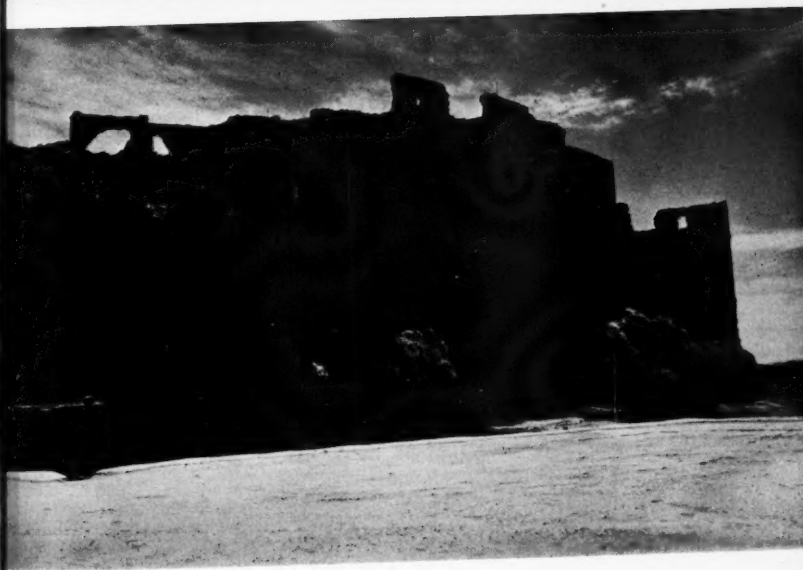
A certain tolerance obviously crept in, and there is another

charming vignette seen from the battlements of Shaizar, which must be given in full.

'I have witnessed the grace of God and the excellence of his protection,' says Usama. 'The Franks, may God curse them, came down upon us with cavalry and foot. And between us and them the Orontes, greatly in spate, so that neither side could cross over to the other. And they camped on the hills with their tents. And some of them came down to the orchards, which lay there on the side, and let their horses loose among the crops and slept. And some young men of the garrison in Shaizar stripped and caught up their swords and swam over to the sleepers, and killed several of them. But they increased in numbers against our friends, who threw themselves into the water and crossed, while the Frankish soldiers came riding like a torrent from their hill. Now nearby was a mosque . . . and in it a man called Hasan the Ascetic, and he was standing on the roof in penitence and prayer wearing a black woollen garment. And we saw him, and there was nothing we could do for him. For the Franks came down upon the entrance to the mosque, and climbed up to him, and we said: "There is no power and no strength except with God. They will now kill him." But no, by God, he never interrupted his prayer nor moved from his place. And the Franks turned back and mounted and went away, and he remained motionless standing in prayer. And we have no doubt that God, may he be glorified, blinded them on his account and covered him from their sight.'

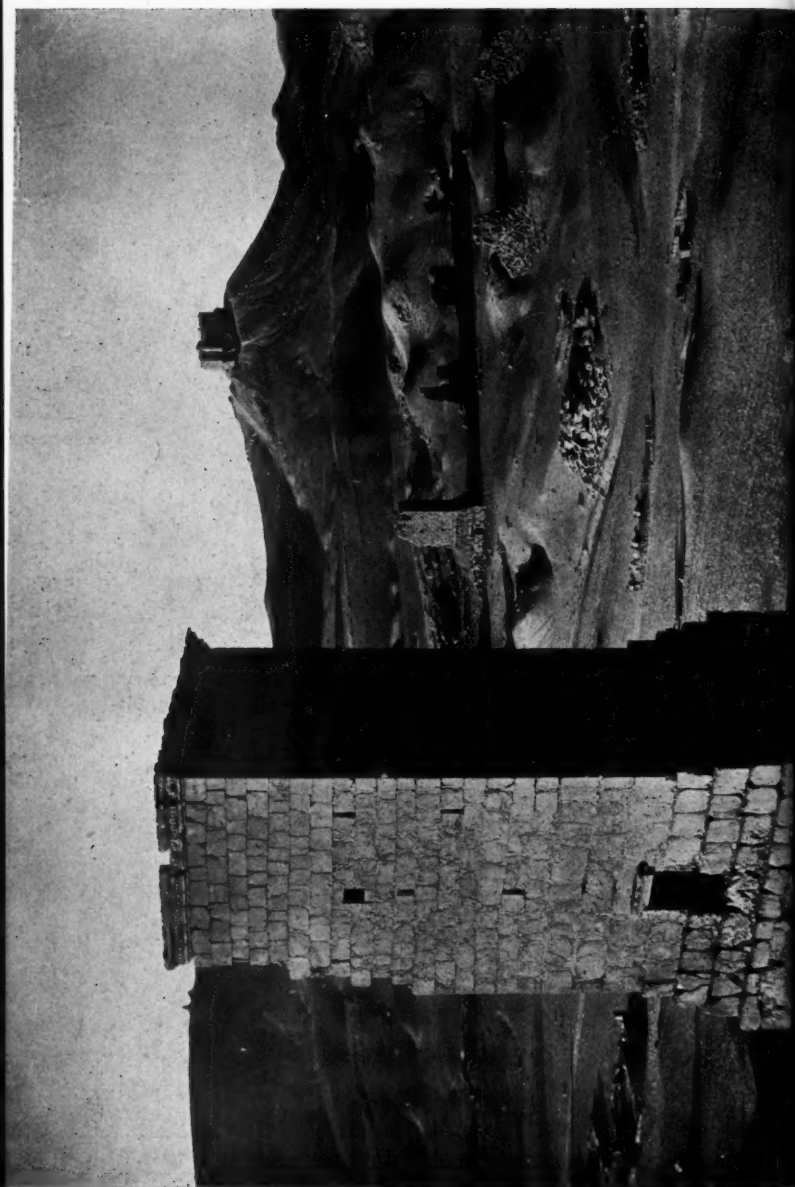
Anyone who knows the East can see that solitary figure standing, in the same unmoved manner yesterday or to-day or ever.

A few Franks actually deserted—Usama mentions one who was obviously a pushing young man, 'an ignorant lad,' much disliked by the great lords whom he displaced at the siege of Amida. Matthew Paris mentions a Templar called Ferrandus 'in armis strenuus, et in consilio circumspectus' who betrayed the Christian garrison in Damietta in A.D. 1221. There was one instance also of an English Templar, Robert of St. Albans, who became a Muslim and married the Caliph's daughter, and in A.D. 1185 led the Saracens towards Jerusalem. The Templars were criticised for their intimacy with the Saracens, which was no doubt a matter of sound policy. It was also carried on in a robust English way by Richard Cœur de Lion, who may or may not have employed the Assassins to rid him of Conrad of Montferrat—but certainly had no anti-Arab feelings: for when peace was to be made he suggested basing it on a marriage between his sister and Saladin's brother, Malik al-'Adil, provided he became Christian, and king



FROM THE MUSLIM FORTRESS OF PALMYRA.

THE RUINS OF MASYAF.



PHENICIAN TOMBS AND THE MUSLIM CASTLE OF PALMYRA.

HE OR



THE ORONTES NEAR SHAIZAR.



KRAK OF THE KNIGHTS : THE COURT.

THE STREET OF SHAIZAR.

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of Jerusalem. And when 'two natives of Syria arrive to tell Richard of caravans to be intercepted,' the King, doubtful of the news, sends his Beduin servant and two of his Syrian-born Turcopoliers to make sure. The caravan had about 3,000 camels loaded and 4,000 horses and mules and was guarded by 10,000 Persians.

This was the pleasanter side of the wars, which had also unpleasant modern characteristics, such as the infecting of rivers (by throwing in Christian bodies), the use of prisoners as slaves to build Saladin's citadel in Cairo, and the crusading taxes for which 'during the year 1188 all England was grievously oppressed. Three nobles, owing to illness, being permitted to remain at home, the King's Treasurer transferred the whole fortunes of the three into the Exchequer.'

It is most unfortunate that the part of Usama's memoirs which deals with the Assassins is lost. Only a few short references are left. The first speaks of a young man 'who was one of the three whom the Ismaili threw out of Shaizar castle,' when they attacked in A.D. 1109, or 1114 as appears from other sources.

Another refers to a lad whose dog saved him from a lion—'a lad belonging to the One who is obeyed, him whom the mountain people almost adore.' And a third reference is interesting because it describes the methods used by the Assassins over and over again, from the Mediterranean to the confines of Afghanistan, to get hold of key-fortresses which made them unassailable for nearly two hundred years. This happened 'in the Castle Khurba (or Khuraba), . . . a fortified place raised up above the wilderness on every side. One climbed into it by a wooden ladder which, when lifted, allowed of access. There was no one in it with the governor, except his son, a servant, the porter, and a friend of the porter's, who would go up to them from time to time on business. And this man talked with the Ismaili, and they bribed him to hand over the castle, and he went up and asked to go in, and climbed the ladder, and began with the porter and killed him; and the servant met him, and he killed him; and he went in to the governor and killed him; and turned back and killed the son and handed the castle to the Ismaili; and they stood by what they had promised. "For men," says Usama, "if they strengthen their spirits to do something, they do it."'

The references to the Assassins are scattered everywhere in the chronicles of that time, and cover an immense area, since the sect spread in its secret way over all the Muslim world. To call it Ismaili (as is often done) is not quite fair, for it was an offshoot twice removed from the original Shi'a doctrine of the vanished

Imam. Its character is Persian, originally and in both its transformations. The first transformation was engineered by Abdulla the son of Maimun, who fled from Persia and settled at Salamiyah near Hama. This is still the religious centre for the Ismaili and from it, under Ali Khan, the Aga Khan's son, came a good deal of help to the Allies during this war. From here the Ismaili at the end of the ninth century A.D. spread to the West, and returned triumphantly to establish the Fatimite dynasty in Cairo. Their doctrine was based on a wide tolerance centralised round a secret hierarchy: the result made Cairo the most civilised city of the world at that time. Nor did the orthodox Muslim theologians like al-Ghazzali, condemn it with real anger.

The second transformation, which gave the word assassin to the languages of Europe, was a very different matter. This also came from Persia and was also the work of an individual—Hasan i-Sabah, the first Old Man of the Mountain. He developed and accentuated the doctrine of obedience to a divine emissary, and he strengthened it by a careful system of assassination. The story of his warriors, soothed with hashish (the word assassin is really hashishiin) in the remote Persian valley, and sent out to strike his victims, is too well-known to repeat here: but the fierceness, the imagination, the cruelty and mysticism of Persia must be remembered; for it was this new Persian influence which moulded the Ismaili movement of the twelfth century, ousting the easy liberalism of Cairo in the minds of contemporary men. The Assassins—whose known murders make a list unbelievably long—became the universal enemies of their time: help against them was asked from Henry III of England, and it was to attack their strongholds specifically that the Mongol armies moved. This fatal heresy may be held to be the immediate cause of the ruin of Western Asia, when Hulagu Khan, having captured their capital, Alamut, in 1256, marched on to the sacking of Bagdad.

The Assassins of Syria were—except for a very short interval of independence—a branch of the Alamut tree. This was not generally known to the Crusaders, who, when they speak of the Old Man of the Mountain, are thinking of him who ruled what is now the Alaouite country, the wild hills between Orontes and the Sea. Here they penetrated among the Nosairi, a sect superficially Shi'a, similar to the Ismaili, but with a pagan background that belongs to far older histories. The land indeed is scattered with ruins more ancient than the Muhammedan past. The Nosairi naturally loathed the Ismaili invaders, and they loathe them still, and the war goes on—at least it did so when I rode about those hills in

1939 and found villages slowly wrested by one sect from the other. I began with an Ismaili guide and found no food in the Nosairi villages : and nowhere in these hills is bread a commodity for sale. Eventually I hired two guides, and the one whose religion happened to fit, stepped forward in the villages we came to.

The Crusader castles are easy to visit, but the Assassin strongholds are perched in the most inaccessible country : paths like stairs lead up to them over slabs of slippery rock, where even the local pony is apt to fall backwards.

The Assassins first established themselves in Aleppo : they were allowed a public place for worship, and in A.D. 1102 they murdered the prince of Hama to oblige their protector. In 1126 they took Banias on the coast : 1132-3 they bought Qadmūs and Qāf in the mountains ; and in 1140-1 entered by treachery the important fortress of Masyaf, in the foothills that look to Orontes and Hama. Resafa, and Khawabi that holds the valley to the west was theirs, and Alleiqa was taken by the greatest of their Syrian leaders, Rashid ad-Din Sinan. I have visited all his group of castles. Roughly built, and very unlike the polished work of the Crusaders, they were the backbone of the Assassin strength, though many fortresses—seventy in all have been computed—were scattered along the coast north and south, and there must have been stations for safe and swift travel to Persia. (Salamiyah, the original Ismaili centre, was on the Antonine and later on the Arab highway between Homs and the Euphrates.) The centre of all, the last refuge in 1260 when Masyaf was taken by the Mongols, the last to surrender to Sultan Baibars in 1273, and even now the most difficult of access, was Qāf—on a headland surrounded by precipitous ravines. Hither, in 1162, came an Iraqi stranger from Basra, originally one of the Nosairi colony there but now a member of the Ismaili sect, dressed in an old striped Yemeni cloak, and home-made sandals with Persian buttons. After a time he was taken into the household of the head of the Syrian Assassins in the fortress on the hill ; and for seven years he lived there, serving in poverty and austerity, and passed for a saint among the hillmen. Only when the old chief was dying did the stranger show a paper from the Persian lord of Alamut, nominating him lieutenant in Syria.

This was Rashid ad-Din Sinan, who rapidly became almost a god among the people of the hills. His name is still revered. At Qadmūs, now on the motor-road between Banias and Hama and a very ordinary and uninteresting little town to look at, the chief people, seeing me a pilgrim in their history, admitted that they still meet in secret in the room Rashid ad-Din used to sit in. The

hill from which he watched Saladin's siege of Masyaf, has still a venerated little dome upon it; and his tomb in Qāf, among the overgrown walls and crumbling stones, is doubtless known to the sectaries, though they would not tell it to a stranger.

He had been brought up in Alamut with the fourth Lord of the Assassins, and had learnt the simple tricks which bolstered their prestige: an excellent spy system and the use of carrier pigeons gave him the show of supernatural knowledge. The Aga Khan is now worshipped with the same simplicity and unquestioning devotion, and his son and daughter-in-law, by merely travelling among those villagers, were able to give such pleasure as is rarely possible from one human being to another.

Rashid ad-Din raised the status of the Assassins of Syria from what appears to have been a sort of *Jacquerie* whose members Usama refers to as 'carders and peasants', to an immense political power. He rebuilt and restored the fortresses: the walls of Qāf and Khawabi, and the whole of Resafa were renewed, and so was Alleiqa, whose ramparts were not even cemented with mortar until Rashid appeared. Learned deputations now came winding up the paths, from Aleppo and Damascus and Bagdad; and a century and a half later, when Abu Firas wrote the great men's memoirs, there were mission houses of the Hashishin in Cairo, Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo.

The climax of Rashid ad-Din's life was Saladin's raising of the siege of Masyaf. After two narrow escapes from the Assassin's knives, the great Kurdish general decided in September 1176 to invade the mountain strongholds: Masyaf is easy to reach, it is on the edge of the Orontes plain. Rashid ad-Din came hurrying down from Qadmūs; he appeared one night in Saladin's guarded tent, and left some loaves of the Ismaili bread, some verses, and a dagger poisoned half-way up the hilt. Saladin took the hint, and made a treaty with the Assassins. The fact is that he was never again attacked by them; and when Saladin and Cœur de Lion made peace, the Ismaili territory was included in the treaty.

It has never been quite decided whether Saladin or Richard concerted with Sinan the murder of Conrad of Montferrat: it was carried out by two Hashishin in 1192 and that same year both Saladin and the Assassin leader died. Sixty-eight years later the Mongols came: they were driven back after a few months, but the great days of the Assassins were over: their Persian strongholds were ruined and from A.D. 1265 onwards the Syrian castles paid tribute to Sultan Baibars; in 1270 he entered Masyaf: in 1271 he took Alleiqa. At the end of that year only three castles

were left to the Assassins in Syria. Mainaqah and Qadmūs held out for two years longer and a year later Qāf surrendered its keys and was entered on July 9th, 1273, by the Sultan's lieutenant.

Baibars continued to use the Hashishin and so did his successors : Ibn Batuta found them in 1326 still in their ancient strongholds and carrying on as it were a regular trade of assassination. They had a stipend, and the price of his life was paid to the emissary before he started on his mission : either he or his widow enjoyed it, as the case might be.

The Nosairi lately have been cramping the Ismaili (whom it is no longer fair to call assassins) in their hills. In 1809 they pillaged Masyaf itself, and when I reached this town in March 1939 there was still an uncomfortable atmosphere, what with the feelings of the two sects towards each other, and those of the French towards British females who want to travel on horseback alone. Everything however smoothed itself out and I eventually started, climbing up to Rashid ad-Din's fortress of Resafa in the afternoon. I spent a month riding along the ridges, by the temple of Baal to the Crusader castles, Krak of the Knights and the less visited ones behind Tortosa : by the Phœnician graves and walls of Arvad and its island, to Safita and thence to Khawabi—where the Sunni Muslim have ousted the Ismaili ; and so into the country of Rashid ad-Din, Qāf and Qadmūs and Alleiqā ; and down by Abu Qubais to Shaizar and the great Orontes valley. I came down upon this again, riding from Latakia by Safiun and Slense, and a small Crusader castle on a spur ; one must leave the motor roads and travel on a pony to realise how wild and lonely this country is. The partitioning of Syria has made it a paradise for smugglers, and the excellent Latakia tobacco is carried nightly in sacks across the ridges and the Orontes fords. One would meet groups of stalwart surly people bent under these loads, and they would first look suspiciously, and then relax slightly, seeing the smallness of my equipage and the obviously inoffensive nature of my travel. The villages were friendly if one had the right guide : the Ismaili less easy than the Nosairi, who have a traditional liking for Christians probably derived from the Crusades. But one guide, whom I picked up rather casually, was a beetle-browed fellow whom I ought to have suspected, for his horse was piebald all over its neck and quarters with little circles where the hair had grown a different colour over shot wounds made by the police. This man grew more surly as we descended by an almost break-neck way down into the steaming malarial fertile plain : and as we went through a great loneliness, where the peasants come down only for their

harvests, and the tangle of the Orontes marshes which only smugglers know lies on the right—this man suddenly became furious because I rode and even trotted while he walked, and pulled me from his horse and walked away with it and the saddlebags of luggage. It was a short storm: I walked on, telling him quietly that I meant to hand him to the police at Jisir Shogr, our first halt. His fellow took my part. I walked for about an hour, keeping quite silent, while the repentant smuggler made grabs for my hand and tried to kiss it: if he had succeeded, etiquette would have forbidden me to hand him over to the law. I therefore kept my hands in my pockets and walked on, and only when in sight of the long bridge of Orontes accepted the offered peace. This was my only difficult moment (apart from lack of food here and there) among those 'carders and peasants' of the hills whom Usama's mother feared so much that, when they attacked Shaizar, she veiled her daughter and set her on a balcony, and placed herself with a ready sword near by, to throw her over the edge if the castle were taken.

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Portrait of a Provençal Village

BY THÉRÈSE LAVAUDEN

Before the war, this village had no history. Or rather, it had been content, throughout the centuries, to be an obscure milestone on the plain stretching between Aix and Marseilles, past which, for nearly three thousand years, have filed marauding soldiers (from the Hoplites of Strabo to the Landsknechts of Lurçat), trading nomads, exiled saints, vagabond painters and transhumant flocks. Sheltered from Marseilles on the east by the shimmering Chaîne de l'Etoile, the highest peak of which, rounded like a Thessalian hat, reminded Victor Hugo of the Pindus Hills, the plain is bounded on the north-west by the Sainte-Victoire. The image of the august Aix mountain has been for ever fixed by Cézanne. In its natural shape and contrary to the impression given by the painter, who always seized it in 'trompe-l'œil' through the plane trees of Les Milles, his favourite village, the Sainte-Victoire stretches from Gardanne to Roquevaire as an unbroken wall, a rectilinear escarpment which, before being canonised by the local hagiography, was called Mons Victoriae, having effectively barred the avenues of Roman Provence from the Teuton invaders.

From the Sainte-Victoire to the Chaîne de l'Etoile, the plain is enclosed by a line of 'montagnettes,' fissured at one of the extremities by the great ravine of Roquefavour, where the river Arc, descending from the mountains of Pertuis, bores its way through the leafy gorge to the Etang de Berre. Over the precipice, the Swiss engineer Montricher has flung, with a boldness worthy of Rome, the arches and buttresses of the colossal aqueduct which conveys, high in the air, the waters of the Durance to the reservoir of Realtor from whence they are distributed to the waterworks of Marseilles. A road through the ravine of Roquefavour and the Forêts d'Arbois and Mérindole, leads to the Etang de Berre, Provençal Titarese whose highly-salted waters glisten beyond olive groves and clusters of pine from Rognac to Martigues.

Halfway between Aix and Rognac the Arc winds its way through thickets of aspen and willows, marking its course with a thread of fresh green which, according to the season, contrasts with the red ochre of the winter plough and the fiery gold of the stubble. It is in these cool glades, alive with croaking frogs, midst shady pools and mossy stones, that Cézanne placed his *Baigneuses*. If the peasants

of Les Milles are to be believed, his sole model was his crippled gardener, who, like the one in the song, was

. . . un jardinier qui boite,
Qui boite, qui boite et qui boit.

* * * *

The war years have left curious records in the annals of Les Milles. These start with the requisitioning of the large brickworks by the Vichy Government, who used them as a sorting and concentration camp for Jews and 'Métèques.' This double term stood for the German and Italian refugees expatriated before the war by the two dictators and sheltered on French soil by the Third Republic.

Immediately after the Armistice, the combing out began, and on Hitler's orders, Pétain imprisoned the exiles from Central Europe at Les Milles. The distress of these first victims of internment in France in this vast and unhealthy jail, the heartrending separations, hunger, thirst, fever and cold, and the efforts of the village people to surreptitiously lighten the hardships of these unfortunate victims of racialism, and aid and abet their escape, have all been recorded by Leon Feuchtwänger in the diary of his captivity at Les Milles, 'The Devil in France.'

Then came the German occupation. The invader set his boot on the aerodromes of Lavalette and Campredon, of which the sites had been bought before the war by the French Air Ministry, from two impoverished 'hobereaux.' As soon as the German operations in the Mediterranean began, the army of occupation settled in Les Milles, and requisitioning and billeting began. One of the largest 'Mas seigneuriaux' (Manor Houses) of the plain, was chosen as the General Headquarters for a secret purpose which necessitated the eviction of the owner. The latter was requested by the German Kommandant to remove himself and his personal possessions as fast as possible. Truth obliges us to relate that four soldiers were placed at his disposal to move some furniture into the village dwelling whence, for three years, he watched in silence the fortunes of his 'bastide' and weighed the chances of survival of its centuries-old stones and venerable trees.

The rôle imposed on this beautiful Provençal homestead seemed to vow it to ineluctable doom—for it transpired that it had been chosen to shelter the reserves of *Carburant* required for the aerial operations in Sicily. The site, which, throughout the war, evaded the detection of the R.A.F., had been admirably chosen, and the ruined remains of the colossal masonry which we have seen, show that the blockhouses and anti-aircraft shelters protecting the oil-

tanks, must have been concealed by the three-hundred-year-old plane trees, with an invisibility no less mimetic than that of the Empusa (which Fabre calls, precisely, *Le Diable des Rastoubles*, The Devil of the Stubble), under the tufts of thyme and lavenders of its Provençal habitat.

Since the German resources in terms of forced labour were unrestricted, no efforts were spared to protect the *carburant* from aerial attack. The fine stone of Simiane and Bibémus, whose warm tones recall honey and apricots, and which hitherto had served only to build the mansions of Aix, the 'Folies' on its outskirts and the farmhouses of its countryside, was brought to Les Milles and reinforced by an armour of concrete, to serve as an indestructible protection for cisterns and reservoirs. Daily at dawn, German bombers and fighters would leave for Sicily. The Millois, who watched the departure, rejoiced in the evening as they counted those who did not return. At night, the surviving crews, haggard and dusty, jostled each other at the doors of the brothels which the Kommandatur had organised and peopled with deportees from Poland and 'cagoles' of Marseilles. And, as one of these brothels was in a vast farmstead, formerly given to the breeding of pigs, the name Cochonnier came naturally to describe these establishments in the local dialect.

The Germans committed no atrocities at Les Milles. The inhabitants, like those of hundreds of villages, learnt to live without ever looking the invader in the face, but watching him unceasingly

... avec des yeux distraits,
Qui le voyant toujours, ne le voyaient jamais.

and the Germans, after vain advances, became resigned.

They committed no atrocities, save this, which an old peasant related to us:

One of the sappers at the refuelling station, was in civilian life a flautist of the Bremen Philharmonic. With his flute, he had tamed a magpie, who nested in the plane trees of the drive. He was completely bald and together they were an absurd sight, the magpie perched on his head pecking at his few remaining hairs, the man, flute in mouth, charming Margot with trills and arpeggios. This musical idyll was unfortunately disturbed by the predatory instincts of the winged collaborator who, after all, proved to be only an 'entôleuse.' Identity disks and wrist-watches began to disappear. A whole garland of them was discovered one day in the maquis of the plane trees. This rascally member of the Résistance must be suppressed at once! Its hour struck one morning when the bird

ventured through the open window into the room where the Kommandant was snoring. Gossip affirms that the identity disk of the latter was found on the wall of the latrines. Be that so or not, the end might be called 'A Nazi Variation on the Theme of William Tell.' The Kommandant waited till the simple-minded flautist next charmed the bird from its nest on to his skull, where it sat, jerking its tail up and down. Then, taking aim from the window, this new Gessler shot the magpie dead on the head of the musician.

* * * *

The rapidity of the American advance saved Les Milles from destruction. One evening, whilst behind the Pilon du Roi, the great fires of the bombardment of Marseilles reddened the skies, the Germans, like birds of more evil augur than the larks of La Fontaine,

Voletant, se culebutant,
Délogèrent tous sans trompette.

The next day, the women of Les Milles, in honour of the liberators, unearthed the wine hidden beneath the flagstones of the wells and garden paths.

Apart from the first days of exultation and thanksgiving, the American occupation left no happy memories with the Millois. The peasants who, it cannot be denied, had been impressed by German discipline (during the occupation, there was not a single case of theft, drunkenness or assault in the village, the penalty imposed on the soldatesque by their leaders being too ferocious) did not fail to contrast with it an army which, victorious in other ways, was only too vulnerable to women and drink. The women of Provence are extremely clean and excellent housewives. The vomit of uncontrolled drunkards on the kitchen tiles and bedspreads, the humiliating familiarity of the liberators towards the young peasant girls, whose chastity is as unassailable as that of the Vestals of Antiquity, lowered the value of American prestige as fast as that of the dollar soared on the international market.

Between the two wars, the Germans had loudly proclaimed that the worst tactics of the conquering French had been to quarter native Senegalese troops on the banks of the Saar and the Rhine. At Les Milles, in the park of the Château de Lenfant, with its noble avenues designed by Le Nôtre, the Americans created a 'bagne' for their blacks, and thousands, convicted of robbery, manslaughter and rape, were imprisoned there. They were brought to the railway-station in cages, thrown into the armoured lorries

awaiting them, strung together like sausages, and taken to the prison camp which was surrounded with live wires. Despite this apparatus and the packs of ferocious hounds howling round the camp, numbers succeeded in getting away. When caught, they were immediately shot, not hung as local legend reports. Those who received life sentences served their time pacing round and round the enclosure like animals. In full battle array they marched to the extent of thirty kilometres a day to the beat of the tom-tom, which never stopped. This, more than all the other trials of the occupation, still obsesses, as it obsessed Emperor Jones, the mind of the local population.

* * * *

To-day, the village has returned to its pristine tranquillity. Springtime Georgics, political feuds and 'boulomanie,' fill the April calendar. 'Was Auriol really poisoned before starting for North Africa and what was the antidote that saved his blessed (or cursed) life? Will the Général strike a coup d'état or not?'

Along the roads, the plane trees trail a golden dust, their leaves and flowers as yellow as mimosa. Rising from the red earth, the small, gnarled vines, all twisted alike, resemble the antlers of a herd of stags taken on the gallop and buried alive in full flight.

Communists and Catholics wage furious but friendly warfare in the streets, cafés, schools and shops.

'The coal-merchant is a great rogue—un gros vilain,' said my neighbour, the prie-Dieu keeper of the Church. 'He is a member of the Communist cell—La Cellule—' she whispers. 'And on Saturday, he sells the *Rouge-Midi*, le journal de Moscou, in front of the Bar Pillot. The other day, he came and said to me:

"No coal for a church bug like you."

"Bug?" I answer. "I am a Republican *bon teint*, just the same as you."

'He raised his eyes to the *estatue* of my Saint Joseph, holding the Infant Jesus up there on the corner of my roof. "Who's that, then?" he said. "Isn't it Saint Joseph?"

"Yes, it's Saint Joseph," I said: "the Patron Saint of Communists."

"The Patron Saint of Communists?"

"But yes. *Té*, didn't he share his wife with the Holy Ghost?"

"'Paris,' said Henri of Navarre, 'is well worth a Mass.'"

To the prie-Dieu keeper of Les Mille, a no less subtle casuist, Saint Joseph is well worth a sack of coal.

* * * *

To what cause must one attribute the double rise of sap which, at Les Milles, as throughout France, brings an outburst of religious fervour and the renewal of family fecundity. Is it Cybele or Venus, Mars or Mercury, or the Saintes Maries de la Mer, who are peopling the village hearths, which only a few years ago were so bereft of children? In Les Milles, the cradles are full, and both 'la Laique' and the Church School, are packed; 900,000 children were born in France last year, to which the village made ample contribution.

Cynics will say that children are now the only Government Securities paying safe dividends, and that if the French of all classes are busy begetting children, it is because the Government grants to large families enable the father to spend his life playing bowls after the birth of the fifth child. Biologists invoke the blind instinct of recuperation after bloodshed. And believers will tell you that, if the cradles are full, it is because the churches are full also.

The inhabitants of Les Milles vowed to build an oratory on a local hill, the Serre, with stones transported by hand, if God drove the Germans out of Provence.

Directly the army of occupation took flight, men, women, old people and children set to and demolished the blockhouses of the Grand Mas, and in long lines, like ants or caterpillars, they carried the stones up the hill. To-day, their lovely oratory stands in rustic simplicity on the crest from where, looking north-east, Aix nestles at the foot of its mountain in an Arcadian setting evocative of Poussin. Beyond the pine woods, on the other side of the horizon, glisten the waters of the Etang de Berre. Not far from the chapel rises a broken column which, according to local tradition, was dedicated to the Phocæan Venus. Thus, once more, as throughout her history, Provence here associates pagan and Christian deities on neighbouring altars. Near the rustic stone and the sylvan glade haunted by the goat-foot and the Naiad, has arisen the sanctuary at which peasant faith worships with the same offerings: flowers of the field and box-leaf. Against the backcloth of Mons Victoriæ, the humble shrine of the Liberation of Les Milles stands dedicated to Notre-Dame de Bonne Fortune:

Ave, Mater bonæ fortunæ, posuimus te custodiem.

In such a spot, after eight years of absence, it is good, when the sun is setting behind the Grand Arbois, to hear the strange Angelus, sung to the glory of the changeless gods of Provence, earth, water and wind, by a chorus of tree frogs, grey owls and nightingales.

The Historic Logic of King Jesus

BY ROBERT GRAVES

Most historical novels are modern stories in fancy dress, projected on the past. Their object is pure entertainment and no care is taken to avoid anachronisms or distortions of established fact. My novels are less light-hearted. They are attempts to restore the lost or damaged parts of some real story by reliving the period in which it occurred. When I first applied this 'analeptic' technique to the story of the Emperor Claudius, which had been mistold, or half-told, by four well-known classical historians, the result was generally approved; and nobody complained when I applied it to Count Belisarius, the sixth-century Byzantine general. But when my subject was the private life of John Milton, the poet, there was an indignant outcry, because Milton, an official hero in all Protestant democracies, happened to come pretty badly out of the story. However, no serious attempt was made to challenge my facts.

Now that my subject is the life of Jesus Christ, the outcry is louder, though nobody can accuse me of irreverence. At any rate, unlike most of my historically-minded contemporaries, I do accept the basic elements of the story: namely that Herod, King of the Jews (who had killed two of his sons on the charge that they were conspiring against him and had just sent to Rome for permission to kill Antipater, his eldest son and co-sovereign, on the same charge), made an unsuccessful attempt, for dynastic reasons, on the life of Jesus, the adopted infant son of a Jewish carpenter. That Jesus, after thirty years of obscurity, reappeared as a popular preacher. That when arrested for a breach of the peace He truthfully admitted that He was King of the Jews. That He was also 'The Son of God,' and that He went voluntarily to His death in the hope of redeeming His nation, and all mankind, from the curse of sin, in fulfilment of various prophecies.

The analeptic type of novel demands not only intense original research, but a peculiarly sharp intuition of what is true or false in the relevant documents. Practically every ancient historian has a particular bias, and until one identifies it in each case by finding some small misrepresentation of established fact, progress is difficult. I found the task of unravelling the story of Jesus complicated by the immense amount of misrepresentative editing, layer on layer, from which the Canonical Gospels suffer. However, I began with the

assumption that Jesus was single-minded in His pursuit of truth, that He impressed the necessity of truth on His disciples, and that the writers of the original gospels—the lost Aramaic versions of *St. John*, and of the three ‘synoptic’ gospels—did not deliberately falsify the story. I still hold this view. But, as every Biblical scholar who really knows his subject is forced to admit, the Greek adaptations of these gospels are full of historical discrepancies, and the apocryphal gospels are as bad. The only hope of recovering the true facts is to study early Church politics as well as the historic setting of the life of Jesus; the reasons for the distortion of the original story are to be found there.

Take for example the story of the woman taken in adultery. The story itself rings true, but the Jerusalem setting is historically impossible: all adultery trials in Judaea and Galilee were reserved for the Pharisaic Supreme Court, which never in fact inflicted the death-penalty. The only place where the attempted stoning could have been possible—and the adulterer would have been stoned too—was at Samaria, where the Pharisees had no jurisdiction and the Mosaic Law was still observed with primitive rigour. This shift of scene might be excused as unintentional if the same anti-Pharisaic bias did not appear in the tribute-to-Caesar incident. It could not have been the Pharisees who tried to put Jesus into the reported dilemma, because they were forbidden to bring unclean money into the Temple and would, therefore, not have dared produce the tax-penny at His challenge. His opponents must, therefore, have been the pro-Roman Herodians, who were lax in such matters. These two minor libels on the Pharisees point to a more shocking instance of editorial guile: the parable of the so-called Good Samaritan.

The original story was introduced by Jesus's answer to the earnest young man¹ who consulted Him about salvation: namely that Rabbi Hillel, the late Pharisaic President of the Supreme Court, having been asked much the same question by another young man, had referred him to two texts in the Pentateuch, the first about loving God, the second about loving one's neighbour as oneself. (The acknowledgment to Hillel has been suppressed by the gospel editors.) The young man then asks for a definition of ‘neighbour,’ in the sense of the person to whom a debt of love is owed. Jesus answers with a story in the conventional Pharisaic form, about a Priest, a Levite and a Son of Israel. In this type of story, the first two men, being stiff-necked Sadducees, always obeyed the letter of the law, whereas the Son of Israel, being a

¹The story has been doubled and confirmed in the gospels.

Pharisee, always obeyed the spirit—and was, therefore, held up as a model of virtue. Jesus tells how the Priest, the Levite and the Son of Israel find a *Samaritan* lying naked and wounded by the wayside; Priest and Levite pass by for fear of ritual uncleanness, but the Son of Israel shows him mercy as a fellow-worshipper of Jehovah. 'Who was the neighbour in this case?' And the young man, though aware that the Samaritans had recently defiled the Temple by throwing pigs' bones into one of the holier Courts, was forced to reply: 'The man to whom he showed mercy.'

The orthodox version is illogical: Jesus is made to vary the formula pointlessly and not to give the earnest young man his definition. The anti-Pharisaic obsession which falsified these and other original gospel texts obscures Jesus's whole-hearted acceptance of the most enlightened Pharisaic doctrine of the time: for example, Hillel's rejection of the eye-for-an-eye Mosaic law in favour of monetary compensation, and his insistence on the law of love rather than that of fear. Jesus's castigation of a few narrow-minded provincial Pharisees for not living up to the precepts of Hillel and the Sages has been developed into a rejection of the whole ritual Law. An ingenious piece of falsification is the obvious omission of the word 'only' from his pronouncement: 'It is not *only* that which goeth into a man that defiles him . . .' Jesus was talking of religious bigots who eat the sweet honey of the Law and vow it as uncharitableness.

The cause of this obsession was the complete schism, hinted at in the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, between the Judaic and Gentile branches of the original Church. That the Judaists continued to sacrifice in the Temple and to keep the Law of Moses according to the Pharisaic rulings is proved by Eusebius's account of the martyrdom of the first bishop of Jerusalem, 'James the brother of the Lord: ' and Judaic Christians in Syria were admitted as members of the Synagogue—a purely Pharisaic institution—as late as the third century A.D. But the Gentile Church after dispensing with Jewish ritual observances, such as circumcision and the ban on unclean foods, equated Jesus with God—which to the Judaists was pure blasphemy—and transformed Christianity into a Greek mystery-religion. These changes emptied the Gentile Church of all but a few Jews, and the gospel editors were then at pains to prove that the connection between Christianity and Judaism was tenuous and almost accidental, that Jesus had been rejected and crucified by the Jews after annulling the Mosaic Law, and that they themselves were loyal subjects of the Emperor.

A close scrutiny of the tribute-to-Caesar story shows that it has been doubly falsified. Jesus could not possibly have advised his compatriots to 'render to Caesar that which is Caesar's': to proffer coin with a blasphemous inscription in acknowledgment of Caesar's sovereignty would have been a plain breach of the First Commandment. I read the original text as: 'Render not to Caesar that which is God's, nor to God that which is Caesar's'—which amounted to saying that the tribute should, at any rate, not be paid in unclean currency.

It was very dangerous to be a professing Jew after the revolt that culminated in Titus's destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70: still more dangerous after the second revolt two generations later under the Messianic pretender Bar Cocheba, when ritual Judaism was placed under the Imperial ban and a temple of Jove raised on the Holy Hill of Zion. The Gentile Christians had to work hard to show that since Jesus's message was international and pacific they had no interest in militant Jewish nationalism; and by now they were forgetting the true facts of the story.

However, they were clumsy in their editorial work, and quite enough of the original story remains to prove that Jesus was neither a charlatan nor a renegade. The interview between him and Pilate (about whom we know a good deal from non-Christian sources) is unlikely to have been a pure invention, and if Pilate took so much personal interest in a case which ordinarily would have been settled in a lower Court, with the maximum penalty of a severe flogging, and involved the Roman-appointed High Priest and Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee in it, then we must take his question to Jesus 'Are you the King of the Jews?' seriously. Jesus first replied by asking the source of the information on which Pilate's question was based, and then admitted that he was the King of the Jews, though he waived his claim to the temporal power that the title carried with it. But to be 'King of the Jews' could have meant only one thing, namely to be a legitimate son (by a secret marriage) of Herod's eldest son King Antipater, who was murdered five days before Herod's own death and a few months after Jesus's birth at Bethlehem.

Now, in Hebrew tradition, human parentage was consistent with subsequent divine parentage; but only in the case of kings. That Jesus was the Son of God in the technical sense of divine rebirth at a coronation ceremony is clear from the discreet account preserved in *St. Luke*, and a fragmentary early gospel, of the descent of the Dove from Heaven, the bright light that shone on Jordan, Jesus's lustration and His subsequent royal vigil with the four

symbolic wild beasts. A verse from the Coronation psalm is quoted :

My beloved son you are, this day have I begotten you . . .

the remainder of the passage being omitted as politically dangerous. If this account makes any sense at all, it means that Jesus, not content with His paternal title, was reviving the ancient sacred monarchy of 'all Israel.' But a careful study of this monarchy shows that, as at Rome, the succession was in theory matrilineal : the King was the husband of the royal heiress, or a harem of heiresses. It follows logically that Jesus had a Queen, without whom the coronation ceremony was incomplete. The gospel editors were obliged to keep very quiet about this, because the Romans would have suspected that He might have left heirs to renew his pretensions ; nevertheless a poetic account is smuggled into the *Apocalypse*—the Marriage of the Lamb. For the identity of the Queen the only evidence is the statement that Jesus loved Mary, Lazarus's sister ; though the editors add that He also loved Lazarus and Martha, the sister who reproved Mary for sitting at Jesus's feet. However, that the marriage was not consummated is suggested by Jesus's rigid insistence on the need for spiritual eunuch-hood during the period of preparation for the Great Day.

It appears that at this coronation Jesus consented to the 'marrying' prophesied for the Messiah by Isaiah, by accepting the sacred lameness of Jacob, the first King of Israel. In the *Talmud* Jesus is cryptically referred to as 'Balaam the Lame' and an early Hebrew tradition records that He was lamed when trying to fly—part of the antique coronation ritual being to assume the wings of gryphon, hawk, dove or other sacred bird. St. Jerome records that Jesus was deformed, and this is consistent with the sacred lameness, which involved an anterior dislocation of the thigh. Such an injury would explain the gibes of His Nazareth neighbours, 'Physician heal thyself !' when he returned home after His coronation, and also His physical inability to carry the cross-piece of the Cross as all condemned men were obliged to do under Roman penal law. Christians to whom Jesus is a twentieth-century character in first-century dress and who refuse to believe that He could have consented to so primitive a ceremony—though equally primitive ones were practised in Rome and Athens at the time—ought to look up the voodoo-like charm (in *Leviticus XIV*) that He approved in the case of the vitiliginous leper He healed.

One of the most important historical facts obscured by the gospel editors—it troubled St. Jerome, a Hebrew scholar, who had great

difficulty in reconciling it with his faith—was that crucifixion carried with it the curse of damnation. 'He that is hanged upon a tree is accursed of the Lord.' Unless this is realised, the magnitude of Jesus's sacrifice cannot be appreciated. When Pilate offered Him the chance of saving His life by a compromise—as I read the story he even offered to support His claim to the Herodian throne—He steadfastly refused. Many upright men have preferred honest obscurity to dubious glory ; or death and the hope of salvation to a breach of principle. But Jesus's case is unique. When threatened with crucifixion unless He would play the Roman game, He preferred not merely death but damnation to worldly glory attained by a breach of principle.

If my views are historically sound, or even plausible, why have they not been advanced before ? I had to ask myself this question frequently in the course of writing *King Jesus*. The answer is, I think, that people with the necessary historical knowledge to formulate them have been afraid to do so—'gospel truth' being proverbially unshakable—and will continue for a very long time to withhold their approval now that they have been formulated. My happiest moment recently was when I heard from the one Hebraist in the United States with a really comprehensive knowledge of the subject that in his opinion my facts are not historically disprovable. But, as a college professor, he wisely asked not to be quoted as saying so.

Recent Popes have rightly condemned the 'divided house of faith and reason,' but outside the fundamentalist fold where is there any simple faith to be found ? I do not claim to have got my version of the story right in every detail—my intuitions are not always as sharp as I would wish—but at least it makes reasonable sense and does not conflict with faith in the religious and moral integrity of Jesus ; though I believe that he identified himself with God only when speaking in the traditional style of Isaiah or Jeremiah, as God's prophetic mouthpiece. And no one need regret that I have 'explained away' the miracles of the water turned into wine, and of the loaves and fishes by suggesting that these were symbolic acts, not reversals of nature—that the water was converted into wine allegorically, the people were fed spiritually ; the importance of the acts was the precise message that Jesus was attempting to convey in their performance. The disciples doubtless understood him ; but the Gentile Church has chosen not to understand. Why these acts were misrepresented as miracles is easily explained ; an early rival of Christianity was the 'gymnosophism' of Apollonius of Tyana, a miracle-monger who had

studied under the Indian yogis and practised mass-hypnotism. The Christians wanted to prove that Jesus could do just as wonderful things, forgetting that He had sternly refused to gratify public taste by any such displays of power; even for His healing miracles He took no credit—they resulted, He said, from the sufferers' own faith in God.

The Mysterious Landscape

A Study of Alain-Fournier

BY DAVID PAUL

'Ma passion est si forte et si haute qu'elle arrive presque à créer l'impossible objet de son désir.' The English reader, coming upon such a sentence, is haunted, as by a family likeness in a foreign face. It is not long before the likeness is identified—in Marvell.

My love is of a birth as rare
As 'tis for object strange and high.
It was begotten by despair
Upon impossibility.

The sentence occurs in a letter of Henri Alain-Fournier's, written when he was twenty. Though he was studying English at the time, I think it is very unlikely that he was actually acquainted with Marvell's *Definition of Love*, a poem which was little known to the English reader of forty years ago, and had hardly begun to figure as an anthology piece. Alain-Fournier's phrase, to anyone acquainted with his writing, is as characteristic of its author as Marvell's verse is characteristic of Marvell—though each writer is approaching a state of mind which transcends the personal. The coincidence is more one of feeling than of words, and indicates a deep but unexpected affinity. In both writers there is a balance of passion and delicacy, of nostalgia and clarity which denotes a rare, if retiring spirit. The affinity denotes something else. Though Alain-Fournier was, as he said himself, 'profondément paysan'—and of the French soil—there is a quality in his work which is almost unique in French writing. The French mind, even the mind of a La Fontaine, tends to dwell exclusively in the world of experience. Alain-Fournier is one among the very few of his countrymen who could have been perfectly at home in the worlds of innocence of Blake and Shakespeare, of Vaughan and Traherne. With Wordsworth and Traherne in particular he has this in common, that his whole work is dominated by the memory, and the continuance of sensations which were most deeply felt in childhood.

The landscape of a happy childhood is at once familiar and mysterious. Every object, every person, every movement and gesture possesses value, grace and significance; a value and a grace which belong, like the details in a picture, to the scheme of

which they are a part ; a significance which can be felt, like that of music, but not explained. The world of childhood is a happy one only when it is lived within its own limits, and even so it possesses its own limbo—a more terrible limbo than that of the adult world, because to the child fear and uncertainty have a limitless quality which the adult contrives to ignore or restrict. The peculiar importance of the world of childhood resides in its unity of experience. This is something which the artist is continually trying to attain—not in its original form, though there are writers like Barrie who resort to a kind of infantilism—but in a form which will satisfy and contain later experience. Every work of art is an attempt to discover, to assert and to express the unity of experience. Even surrealism can best be interpreted as an attempt to assimilate and unify chaos.

Unity of experience is possible in childhood up to a certain moment because the child does not distinguish between himself and what he experiences. He 'understands' and explains to himself a part of his experience. But what is not understood is also assimilated. In fact, what is not understood possesses a peculiar potency, simply because the child identifies himself with it. It becomes a part of his own mystery. It may be the act of leaning from a boat and dipping his hand in the water, or simply of watching a ball rolling along the pavement which gives him a suddenly acute and simultaneous sense of mystery and revelation. It was such a sense which haunted Wordsworth throughout his poetic life, and was the motive for all his greatest poetry. Even Baudelaire, who, among his many anticipations, was a prototype of the artist whose personality is dislocated by an unhappy childhood, even Baudelaire, in one of the rare instances in which he justified his boast of being able to apprehend and express experiences which were not his own, celebrated the world of childhood in lines which are now almost too famous to need quotation.

Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,
Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,
Les violons vibrant derriere la colline,
Avec les brocs de vin, le soir, dans les bosquets,
—Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,

L'innocent paradis, plein de plaisirs furtifs,
Est-il deja plus loin que l'Inde ou que la Chine ?

That world is certainly more remote now than India or China, and in a more than individual sense. Perhaps the two preceding

paragraphs should have been written in the past tense. The tendency of the twentieth century to cut across all unitary values has also prevailed in the world of childhood, which is now in danger of losing its identity. It is aware of the adult world almost as soon as it is aware of its own. It is prematurely exposed to anxiety, aridity and tension. The wireless and the cinema subject it to explanation, entertainment and boredom. It is constantly liable to inspection, analysis, encouragement and exploitation by the adult. It is never left alone.

In the solitary novel which he left behind, before disappearing on the German front in 1914, Alain-Fournier has left perhaps the last version of the world of childhood which can be compared with those of Wordsworth or Traherne. That alone, of course, does not indicate or explain the novel's significance as a whole. *Le Grand Meaulnes* was conceived in childhood, intensely felt and brooded over in adolescence, and at last written in the author's middle twenties, apparently with the dictated ease which sometimes follows long premeditation. On the surface it is, as the author called it, simply a 'novel of adventure and discovery.' But the surface is the least part of it, and though the surface seems transparent, it cannot disclose the dimension in which the adventures takes place, or the nature of the discoveries. The novel contains its own interior illumination, and little light can be thrown on it from without. But some help in penetrating its recesses is afforded by Alain-Fournier's other writings, and most of all by his long correspondence with his closest friend, the critic Jacques Rivière.

Happily both sides of the correspondence have been published together, so that a complete narrative is provided of the relationship of the two friends, and of their emotional and intellectual growth; at the same time it provides two pictures, sometimes contradictory, often mutually corrective, of the world in which they lived. It begins in 1906, when the two correspondents were aged about 19, and ends shortly after the outbreak of the first world war. The characters of the two friends are the kind of opposites which chime: Alain-Fournier, brusque, vigorous, occasionally impassive and given to bouts of silence, afflicted at times with inarticulacy like a toothache, qualifying or confirming Rivière's enthusiasms, reading more with a view to assimilating his own than with the critic's impersonal appraisal of what he read; Rivière, feminine, nervous, excitable, an exhaustive and acutely intelligent reader, subject throughout his early twenties to a series of prostrating and agonised admirations—almost like a series of illnesses—for one literary figure after another—the ascendants and declines of Maeterlinck, Barrès,

Claudel and Gide, follow each other like breakers in a heavy sea ; Fournier 'refusing to formulate himself' ; Rivière perpetually searching for a formula, like a quick-change artist ransacking a jumbled wardrobe ; Fournier in love with infinity, and searching for its manifestations in memories or in the casual sights of a dusty *banlieue* on a hot April morning ; Rivière very much in love with Fournier (whose sister he married), writing letters of frantic reproach, intuiting coldnesses, reading unbearable meanings between lines, lamenting the failure to respond, the non-arrival of a post-card ; Fournier, 'having met Antigone in another life,' haunted and dissatisfied ; Rivière having found Isabelle in this one, settling down to contented marriage and ecstatic parenthood. All the crises and monotones of both lives are reflected, the plans and sudden reversals, the examinations failed, the agonies of military service, the literary dreams and projects, the essays and free-verse poems tremblingly submitted to select reviews, the rejections, the condolences, the excitement of a letter elicited from Claudel in China and the resultant religious crisis, an introduction to Gide. As the years pass a change gathers over the letters. They contract under the pressure of outside events, become nerveless and off-hand. Their reflective quality is rippled over by the continual current of events and emergencies. The legendary expansive leisure of the earlier years is gone.

It is the earlier part of the correspondence which therefore offers the greater interest ; and Alain-Fournier's letters, inevitably, are today of greater significance than those of his friend. While Rivière gravitates excitedly from one idea to another, Fournier, having early divined the world of his own art, gravitates steadily towards that alone, so that the sense of his letters is more deeply continuous. The earlier letters, at least, can be justly compared with those of Keats. The disadvantage of such a comparison lies with the French writer. He did not lead so retired an existence. He had to contend with all the distractions of good health, of finding a way of earning a living, of military service (after a preliminary crisis he arrived at a curious, exterior reconciliation with this, and proved sufficiently competent to become a cavalry officer) and finally of daily journalism in Paris. In spite of all, his letters have something of the leisured penetration, the wisdom and the charity of Keats. There is at times even an unconscious identity of thought : 'Il faut être poète, c'est-à-dire se confondre, et s'éparpiller'—'Il n'y a d'art et de vérité que du particulier.'

Though his concentration is always on the particular, his perception of a principle is often startling : 'An art is lost, a moment

of art is finished as soon as a formula is discovered.' At moments this perception can be prophetic, as when he forecasts (in 1906) a new kind of novel, 'A novel without characters, where the characters are nothing but the flux and reflux of life and its encounters.' He could not, of course, be a compatriot of Pascal and La Rochefoucauld without at times eliciting a piercing maxim of a moral order, as when he speaks of 'un plaisir pervers, c'est-à-dire le plaisir de quelque chose qui donne la mort.' He passes beyond the philosopher and the moralist into the poet's and his own world when he says, 'How do you suppose that a slender philosophic scaffolding can be an adequate representation, even algebraically, of the world in which we live?'

Alain-Fournier was neither a precocious nor a prematurely sophisticated writer, and it is natural that the early letters should speak with the voice of adolescence. Few writers have felt or evoked with such eloquence the nameless, overpowering impulses of youth, but the intensity never wanders into vagueness, and rarely into sentimentality. On the contrary it tends always to transfer itself to something seen—a landscape glimpsed from the train, a Paris backwater, a family of gypsies, with their caravans—to concentrate its quality, not on an abstraction, but on some exterior object, often an unexpected one.

Tied up short under the first caravan there was an old bald bear, who kept on trotting three little steps, and lifting one of his hind feet, and then beginning all over again and repeating the three steps, and so on, with a persistence that made one dizzy . . . For a long time after I could still hear the thud of the bear against the caravan at every third step. Suddenly I understood that he must be dancing, practising, without pause or interruption, a polka or a mazurka . . . I believe that only a sympathy without limits is capable of communicating the life of the past, and the thought which it produced and which is itself. One must learn to dance for a while with the silent bear.

Even the most youthful of the letters cannot be qualified as those of a belated romantic. Alain-Fournier's impulse was always direct and never literary. He was possessed by an interior passion which, after concentrating a moment on the objects and persons round him, shot past them into infinity. His relationship with Yvonne de Galais—whose name he quite simply gave to the heroine of his novel—can only be compared, if to anything, to Dante's relationship with Beatrice. Five years after he saw her for the last time he could still write: 'C'est toujours du même mal que je souffre. Ne vous y trompez pas. Jamais.' The minor love-

affairs he attempted always ended in the same way. 'Seules les femmes qui m'ont aimé peuvent savoir à quel point je suis cruel. Parce que je veux tout. Je ne veux même plus qu'on vive dans cette vie humaine.'

At the age of 19, Alain-Fournier came to London, to improve his English, and worked for a few months in a broker's office. He appears to have seen everything with an enchanted eye. Certainly London was for him a very different place from what it had been for Rimbaud and Verlaine thirty years before. The world of Gunnersbury in 1906—the white suburban villas islanded in shrubby gardens, the green twilight garden-parties with 'fairy' lights in the trees, the croquet, the introductions, the eloquent but barely perceptible flirtations—emerges from his letters as a Watteauesque world. For the English reader it is almost as improbable an apparition as the treeful of angels which the youthful Blake saw on Peckham Rye. One must understand that Alain-Fournier was doing, in a different medium, exactly what Watteau had done two centuries before, and the material he used was neither more nor less worthy of the curious transformation it was to undergo. It was to emerge in its final apotheosis in 'La Fete Étrange' in the novel. Alain-Fournier himself was keenly aware of the actual qualities of his material, and of how much had to be wrought into it in order to make it expressive of what he felt. As he says of himself on another occasion, 'J'ai tiré de moi, et rien que de moi, des trésors de poésie que j'ai mis dans les plus médiocres spectacles.'

At a first reading, *Le Grand Meaulnes* is as clear and as defiant of explanation as would be the surface of a lake reflecting a sky which one cannot see. At a further reading it may be more deeply felt, but it becomes no easier of explanation. Its meaning is of the kind which one feels in certain pictures, more particularly in those of Watteau and Giorgione. Giorgione has been called an abstruse and allegorical painter, but both terms miss the mark. No amount of abstruse speculation or allegorical ingenuity will even begin to elucidate such a picture as the Pastoral Concert, in the Louvre. Every detail of the picture—the white urn-shaped woman turning to dip a jug in the cistern, the two dark-faced musicians leaning secretively towards each other, the woman playing the flute, the sun-soaked background—is weighted with a value beyond its purely æsthetic, functional significance. No appeal to allegory or the pastoral convention will explain it either. The whole picture is intent with a meaning beyond meaning in any explicable sense of the term. It is precisely this kind of symbolism which provides the unknown and immeasurable dimension throughout *Le Grand*

Meaulnes—until it unfortunately fails and vanishes a little before the close. It might seem that no quality could be less calculable, and in a way this is true. Yet the letters show how constantly, how critically and how consciously (in so far as consciousness can help the artist) this quality was sensed and searched for by Alain-Fournier for years before the novel was written. A single quotation will show how clearly he perceived the value and the limitations of the rather obvious dramatic symbolism of Ibsen, and at the same time arrived at something like a definition of the kind of symbolism he wished to employ himself. A propos of *The Master Builder*, he writes :

Do you not find this symbolism rather facile, a thing of words and no more?—I build my tower, I climb to the summit, I lose myself in the clouds, my tower crumbles, and so on. It is all of the kind that becomes so tiresome in such expressions as 'you are my princess' or 'Building castles in Spain.' I feel it is profoundly unsatisfactory when one can indicate precisely the symbolic meaning of all the characters : *He* stands for the sociological poet, *she* stands for the imagination, *she* stands for the past. I could wish simply that the lives of the characters and the existence of the symbols were so mingled that they could not be distinguished. I feel that their lives should be the symbol, and not they themselves. Otherwise it becomes childishly easy to solve the equation $A = \text{Imagination}$, $B = \text{Routine}$ and so on.

The sensations which haunted him, and for which his work was to be a means of expression, had been with him from early childhood, as they had been with Wordsworth. They can only be explained, I think, to the extent that they can be traced to the childhood sense of identity with the unknown :

As for me, I am not so much concerned with the world of the past, mysteriously felt and transformed in the present, as with a world at once past and longed for, mysteriously mingled with the world of my own life, which somehow or other evokes it. Mystery is a part of everything. But I do not think it is simply a mystery of a will or a divinity, but of a life recalled along with my own past life, of a landscape which the present landscape makes me imagine and desire. I shall not, like Gide, find the words that denote the mystery in the present, the actual landscape. I shall describe the other, the unseen landscape. . . . It may sound like mystification perhaps, but I consider that the other landscape *exists*, that it must be arrived at in order to be described.

The function of Alain-Fournier's work was, of course, 'escapist,' just as all art is escapist in some sense of the term. He was seeking

to escape into his own reality. Unlike the romantic, who constructs or invents it, he was trying to discover it. He has something, but only a little, in common with Gérard de Nerval. There is a delicate but strong foundation of ordered and conscious purpose, of self-critical shrewdness in his work which is not to be found in the writings of that rare, but undeniably deranged visionary. Nerval was a child with moments of illumination. Alain-Fournier knew, as precisely as it is possible to know, what he was about. He could not accept the artificial elevations of conventional romanticism, any more than he could have accepted surrealism, or the opium-induced nightmares of Rimbaud (whom he characterised shrewdly, if cruelly, as a 'Coppée perversi,' an aspect of Rimbaud which has never struck his English devotees). He was satisfied never to lose touch with everyday life, because it was his material.

Do you think I am in danger of divorcing the world of poetry from the living world, as so many others have done? On the contrary, it is only in the life of every day that I can feel the sudden waves of impulse that lift me into the other.

Do not imagine me trying to withdraw from daily life. I feel that I can never see it or feel it enough, for behind it lies the other life which I must see and feel. It may be that other life is simply this one, which I cannot see and feel with sufficient fullness . . . Certainly, if I lock myself in my room, if I give myself up to my imagination, I begin to suffocate and wither.

His novel, when he at last succeeded in bringing it into words, was the growth not simply of ten years but of a lifetime, and it proved to be rooted in life as firmly as a flower is rooted in the soil. It fulfilled a function which is very rarely appreciated or carried out by the novelist. It is true that every novel contains a kind of symbolism, but it is too often of the kind which Alain-Fournier appraised and rejected in Ibsen—and a similar criticism might be applied to the novels of Kafka. Or else it is of the inchoate, unconscious and obsessive kind which dominates Dickens and many lesser novelists. For the novelist in general, symbolism either does not exist, or else it possesses a fascination which dominates his work, reducing every other element to a mechanism which will serve its ends—it becomes as deadly as a didactic purpose. Between the two extremes, *Le Grand Meaulnes* seems almost to stand alone. It is difficult to think of any other novel with which it can be classed. But members of the same genus are to be found, if in rather remote or unexpected places. *Le Grand Meaulnes* has an essential quality

in common with *Moby Dick*. Both are novels of adventure, and in each case the adventures have a metaphysical dimension which it is impossible to assess. A comparison also suggests itself—with *A Passage to India*.—It is one of the peculiarities of E. M. Forster that he nearly always occurs to one on second thoughts. It is this which has made him a source of exasperation to some critics and an object of condescension to others. He cannot be placed. He is, on the one hand, an Edwardian novelist who refuses to be relegated to his period, and on the other, he is a writer of genius who refuses to write. His politics have been examined and found to be out of date. His style, his technique have been analysed and found to contain nothing new, nothing that cannot be found in Jane Austen, with whom he is accordingly paired off. His worst offence perhaps is that he does not appear to have 'influenced' any succeeding writer. Beside Hemingway or Malraux, as beside Wells or Henry James, he makes a small noise, but the small noise persists. If any single reason can be found for this persistence, it is to be found in a quality his writing shares with that of Alain-Fournier. 'The symbolists,' said the latter, 'have been badly named, and misunderstood. It is true that they aim at effecting a kind of substitution, but only in order to convey a unique impression.' It is precisely such an impression which is conveyed by almost every incident in *A Passage to India*. The collision with the ghostly pig on the drive along the Marabar road, the death of Mrs. Moore, the fly on the coat-hanger, the apparition of the epileptic—every one of these conveys a meaning beyond itself, but at the same time the impact is single, and cannot therefore be analysed. An episode in one of the earlier novels, which, in its details—an overturned carriage, a killed baby, tears, stony remorse—might have been contrived by Mrs. Henry Wood, yet conveys something of this quality. The short stories, which are earlier still, often disclose a symbolism as naked and shy and awkward as a minor Greek divinity inadvertently present at a garden fête. Here, unconcealed and slightly embarrassed, is the art which later conceals itself with complete and unobtrusive success.

Alain-Fournier's work might well have followed a similar development,—though his first novel was already in very nearly complete possession of its own maturity. One gathers from the letters that his second novel, which was never finished, was to be very different from the first in most respects. Paris was to provide not only its setting but its spirit. Paris, for Alain-Fournier, possessed the fascination of a personality divined but not explicitly understood. It is clear that he had transferred to it some of the feeling which had once

belonged to an earlier landscape. His Paris would have had some kinship with Baudelaire's and with Rilke's, but how it would have emerged it is otherwise impossible to guess. One can only imagine and regret. The later letters, though often casual and hurried, convey a sense of the anguish and disintegration of growth, as well as of the increasing precipitation of outward change. The music of men's lives had already adapted itself to the rhythm of the internal combustion engine. Watching the flight of the first monoplane over Paris, he had a sudden pre-vision of human experience pushing itself into a new dimension where the old scale of measurements no longer applied, where heroism and suffering became so intense as to lose meaning. He saw that scientific expansion could mean little but contraction to the spirit, at least for a time. He had always held, with the tenacity of a mystic, a peasant and an artist, to a conviction which is as simple as it is difficult: 'La vie est belle et grave partout.' No words could indicate more precisely what most people, during the past ten years, have found impossible to believe; but one feels that if Alain-Fournier had survived, whether articulately or in silence, he would have clung to his conviction. To the reader of his letters, even today, his early death seems not so much a literary loss as a personal one.

Fragonard

BY ROBIN IRONSIDE

The serio-comic mythology re-created by Boucher, with lingering magniloquence and in Paphian terms, may still have represented, when Fragonard became his pupil, the ideal of a canonical art, of an art such as flourished under Louis XIV, whose wealth and authority, freely exploited, had ensured subserviency to an æsthetic standard. Boucher was the King's pensioner, and the voluptuous inhabitants of his Olympus flattered the humours of an aristocratic clientèle. For a moment, the rococo style, inflated by his breath acquired that almost subdued elevation which, a generation earlier, at Versailles, had imposed a distinctly national dignity on the perturbation of baroque forms.¹ But Louis XV had neither the will nor the wherewithal to regiment the arts under a governmental orthodoxy and the lively patronage of his titular mistresses was unfavourable to the development of an official school. Though Madame de Pompadour's perception of the value of prestige-advertising transcended any narrow view of her personal renown, her enlightened concern with the arts was not an influence that could prescribe the character they should adopt; and, by the middle of the century, the declining powers of the crown no longer sufficed to direct the movement of Taste. Society was volatilised amid the competing influences of Europe and America, and the arts reflected a lubricity in the national disposition which slipped smoothly to and fro from vice to virtue, from idealism to cynicism, from rococo disorder to Roman simplicity. The licence that could not but find its sanction in the life of the court, under a monarch who employed the police to divert his infestivity with accounts of its scandals, assumed, unabashed and unimpaired, the sentimental prudery of Richardson, whose works, first translated in 1742, were found to be irresistible. The publication of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* antedated by ten years the completion of *Les Hasards Heureux de*

¹ Historians might apply the term 'rococo' exclusively to decorative art and might be able to show that, in this sense, the style was born in France. The term is here used less precisely, and it is true, irrespective of questions of merit, that the difference between Boucher and Tiepolo has the same flavour as that between Coysevox and Bernini. The assumption that this difference is not simply the difference between France and Italy, but owes something to the State-inspired separatism of the art of the *Grand Siècle*, is supported by the liberties in which such artists as Cuvilliers indulged when they were employed by foreign princes.

l'Escarpolette ; and the most impenitent libertine of the period, the duc de Richelieu, was known to possess the gift of weeping. A philosophic tear might appropriately water the cheek of the most sceptical encyclopædist, but the lachrymatory effusions of the ambiguous Diderot, and even of Rousseau, on the purity and tenderness of family affection were not without their oblique suggestion of the ardours of the alcove. The broken pitchers regretted by the innocent females in whom Greuze delighted were readily understood to be the symbols of a less reparable loss, and the *fête galante* might prove to be the confidential motive of the *fête des bonnes gens*. The sterner dispensations of the neo-classic revival in Europe were accepted by Parisian taste with the same equivocal facility. In 1749, Monsieur de Vandières, the brother of Madame de Pompadour and chosen by her for the post of Surintendant des Beaux Arts, was sent to Italy to prepare himself for this appointment. He returned an adherent of Antiquity as revealed by archæology, and Charles-Nicholas Cochin who had accompanied him was moved by the impressions of his visit to publish an attack upon the fanciful complexity, a complexity of unsurpassed elegance, in which, as he supposed, the applied arts were ludicrously entangled. But the protest was somewhat light-hearted ; and though the venerable and influential Monsieur de Caylus, who had originally promoted the neo-classic ideal and endeavoured to sustain it within the Academy, could persuade Mademoiselle Clairon to pose for the students in the restrained attitudes and severe draperies recommended by scholarship, yet such tributes to the discoveries at Herculaneum were largely non-committal. The stringency of Caylus, whom Diderot detested, was fortunately premature. The more characteristic attitude of Hubert Robert was not so careful of historical accuracy ; he felt no compulsion to verify either the position or, occasionally, even the existence, of the antiquities he recorded with so much devotion and elegance. The sculptor, Pigalle, proposed that his equestrian statue of Louis XV should exhibit the King in Roman costume, but, in the interests of an unclassical realism, he lay for hours beneath the belly of a horse studying the movement of the hair and the veins. The neo-classic architecture of Ledoux, whose severe forms, when they are least successful, rival the barren failures of twentieth-century building, might be decorated without any affront to taste, during these last fruitful but confused, hybrid and ill-bred moments of the civilisation of the *ancien régime*, with rococo paintings that conceded very little, in their agitation and irregularity, to the almost theatrical simplicity of their setting.

The art of Fragonard was an Æolian instrument responding with unpremeditated melodies to the inconsonant winds of feeling that inspired, nowhere else more involuntarily, the imaginative temper of this pre-revolutionary generation. But it was an instrument that must have first vibrated to the scent-laden air of Grasse where the artist was born and where the culture of roses was the main support of the population. 'Tuberoses,' wrote Arthur Young of his visit there in 1789, 'are also cultivated for perfumes in immense quantities, for Paris and London. Rosemary, lavender, bergamot, and oranges, are here capital articles of culture.' These scents amid which Fragonard was cradled hovered about him in manhood, and although an impetuous, unconstrained impressibility was the stimulus that excited his talents, their odorous sweetness rarefies the indelicacies of the chamber idyll, hangs in the sunbeam upon a fragment of antique sculpture, or mingles with the more vigorous exhalations of the farmyard and the stable. But this presence was a manifestation of his nature, not a cultivated grace. Pursuit of a consciously evolved æsthetic purpose was incompatible with his impatient uncalculating susceptibilities. Natoire, the genial director of the French Academy at Rome, was impressed with the hasty responses of his pupil and wrote in his wonderful spelling to M. de Vandières (now the Marquis de Marigny) that 'Fragonard a beaucoup de talan mais le trop de feu et le peu de patience l'emporte.' The artist's spirit was so far above prejudice, or even principle, that we may regard the mobility of his capitulations to the variable market as a testimony to his probity. Boucher's interested Gallicanism had moved him to caution Fragonard against the works of Raphael and Michelangelo. 'Si tu prends ces gens là au sérieux,' he told him, 'tu seras foutu.' Vien was an appendage of M. de Caylus and the provisional revival of history painting—untimely provoked, it might almost be said, by the growing importance of the Académie des Inscriptions; Hubert Robert, with all his sensibility, was the purposeful purveyor of ruins in landscape; and Greuze, with an eye on the critics, corrupted to a sickening extremity the delightful 'petite sensation' that had once innocently burlesqued the sentimentalism of Rousseau. Compared with Fragonard, these artists are like *entrepreneurs*. Ignorant of the constraints of specialisation, he surpassed them in his guileless, Arcadian adoptions of the modes they had made their own. That breath of passion, for example, that lifts the leaves, 'qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres,' in the 'Parc aux Cerfs' of his desires was too wild an inspiration to have quickened the impudicities of Boucher; and the simple felicity

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L'ECURIE.

From a private collection.



L'INSTANT DÉSIRÉ.

From a private collection



L'ETABLE.

From a private collection.



VIEW IN A PARK.

From a private collection



RENAUD DANS LES JARDINS D'ARMIDE.

From a private collection.



LE PETIT PRÉDICATEUR.

From a private collection

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portrayed in such a painting as *Le Retour au Logis*, the mirror of Fragonard's credulous pleasure in his own domesticity, is a reproach to the hollow candour with which Greuze rehearsed the same theme.

In 1752, the set subject for the *prix de Rome* was *Jeroboam sacrificing to the Idols*. Fragonard competed successfully, but with what distaste we may easily conceive, and, after three years at the 'Ecole des Elevés protégés,' where with a wisdom that is no longer officially recognised, not only painting was taught, but also history, literary history, geography and mythology, he was sent to the French Academy at the Palazzo Mancini. He remained in Italy under the protection of this body until 1761. Marigny, during this student-ship, was alternately alarmed lest Fragonard's precipitate methods of execution should evade the purposes of the Academy and lest too much official admonishment might extinguish altogether the ardour that had been bestowed by nature. This flame, it became clear, was the complement of a not less natural indolence. We may guess that the speed with which the artist worked arose from a deficiency of the reflective faculty, a compulsion to utter, to apostrophise the force of an impression at the moment of its impact. The technique of the 'esquisse' alone might ensure that the vibrations to which he yielded at such moments were transmitted to the picture before they had died away. But neither patronage nor the Academy could wait upon these brief states of grace, and the artist's rapidity sometimes reveals the impatience less of rapture than of nonchalance; and at Rome it was not the objects of study approved by Natoire that chiefly excited him. He was indeed spontaneously attracted by Solimena, but a list of the Italian masters by whose example, willingly or unwillingly, he was educated, is not the significant pledge of the blossoms he was about to put forth. Italy, for his spirit, wore the aspect of a garden, a sylvan, verdurous but untended plot, strewn adventitiously with fragments of carving and fountains, 'les grands jets d'eaux sveltes parmi les marbres,' an 'English' garden of the kind whose felicitous disorder already pierced the sensibilities of the age and was invading the rigid symmetry at Versailles which Louis XV was happily too poor to keep in trim. Fragonard's response to the Italian landscape reached a climax in the summer of 1760 when, with Hubert Robert, he was the guest of the Abbé de St.-Non in the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. This amiable connoisseur and engraver, whose judgment was trusted by Caylus and whose prints were treasured by Rousseau, had sold, at an early age, his parliamentary office, and had adopted the motto: 'Les arts sont à la vie ce que les fleurs sont aux jardins';

the rest of his life and the whole of the substantial fortune that he derived from clerical sinecures he devoted to the pursuit of pleasure and the advancement of the arts. Fragonard's genius was his special care; and the flood of drawings that the artist produced at Tivoli, as from a Pierian spring, may owe their classical features to his enthusiasm. Their palpitating, aromatic life they owe to the place of their conception, where antiquity, metamorphosed by neglect, arborescent and garlanded, supplied a setting sufficiently unconstrained to accommodate his sensibilities.

On his return to Paris, urged by the needs of his disposition and the attractions of the market, Fragonard easily surrendered to the enticements of *la peinture galante*. We do not know precisely in what depths of tenderness his natural impetuosity involved him; but it is recorded that he matched with acts the licence of his inspiration. One of the earliest Parisian works, *Renaud dans les Jardins d'Armide*, trembles with prescient susceptibility, and the famous *L'Escarpolette* established in a single audacious stroke his reputation as an erotic artist. The note of passion had not before been so melodiously sounded; as he warmed to the theme, his impressions of the Villa d'Este drenched his imagination, with its brambles and lichens, its lyric distances 'bleues et mourantes à dessein'; and the youthful 'voyeur' in such a décor assumes an attitude of Berninesque prostration which, at any other time or place, would have been scarcely appropriate to the pruriency of the exhibition. This perception of nature as ministering to the emotions, however leavened it may have been by the traditions of the rococo style is, in Fragonard, a pre-Romantic faculty; the same favourably disposed scenery refines the larger *Colin-Maillard* of the Louvre and the *Fête à Rambouillet* in the Gulbenkian collection, and it is evident, from reproductions, how much the poetry of the *Le Progrès de L'Amour dans le Cœur des Jeunes Filles* resides in the garden setting, the wild effluence of whose foliage mimics the growth of adolescent desire.¹ Such painting is the valid sanction for that tender divination of the eighteenth century which animates the *Fêtes Galantes* of Verlaine and the *Sylvie* of Gérard de Nerval, who was the owner of original versions, purchased for fifty francs, of *L'Escarpolette* and *Le Colin-Maillard*. Before the close of the century, Fragonard himself, in *La Fontaine d'Amour*, surmised the anguish that was to afflict such poets in their pursuit of passion.

Tradition supposes that Fragonard was the gratuitous recipient

¹ Originally commissioned by Mme du Barry for Louveciennes, in 1771, this famous series of pictures was returned by her to the artist before the final panel was completed. In 1790, Fragonard sold them to his cousin Maubert at Grasse. They are now in the Frick Collection, New York.

of the favours of Mademoiselle Guimard, the ingenious but flat-chested and unbeautiful ballerina, who was also the most captivating and illustrious member of the 'haute impureté' of the day. All that can be affirmed is that she commissioned Fragonard to decorate the Temple of Terpsichore, as she called the model residence, with its private theatre, which the austere phantasy of Nicolas Ledoux had conceived for her, and that a somewhat dramatic quarrel put an end to the painter's contribution before it was completed. It is also true, and the event was more fateful for his art, that he was already engaged to the robust daughter of a Grasse distiller. His marriage in 1769 opened a window upon the idyllic horizons of family bliss that were becoming increasingly, for persons of taste, the admired object of a tender contemplation. Fragonard's family in fact rejoiced in that union, in those recreative affections, that domestic simplicity which Philosophy, in effusive language, was urging upon an enraptured but still recalcitrant nation. Though it was, above all, a tribute to the eloquence of Rousseau, the eagerness with which Society adopted the outward forms of sentimental morality was also a symptom of the prevalent anglo-mania, a rage that Rousseau had both experienced and approved. It was an infection that may have started as early as 1728 when Muralt first published his *Lettres sur Les Anglois*, a work that Rousseau, his compatriot and co-religionist, is known to have digested. Morality and sensibility were the symptoms of the attack, and the French took Hogarth to their bosom almost as the illustrator of Richardson, ignoring the ferocity in his goodness. The alliance of virtue and susceptibility favoured the equivocations of taste and such a novel as *La Vie et les Aventures de J. Thompson*, 'qui tombait dans le vice en pleurant la vertu' might be readily applauded. The pathos that the heart may discover in the operations of virtue at the dictation of the affections was liberally exploited by literature and the arts; and it was in the domestic sphere that examples were most easily to be found. Painters turned, in a tender or rhetorical mood, to the consideration of conjugal gaiety, filial piety and maternal indulgence. The authority of Greuze was founded upon such subjects as *Le Repos du Bon Père* and *Une Grandmère paralytique servie par son Fils*, but he was thought to have taxed sensibility too highly with his vision of *La Mort d'un père dénaturé abandonné par ses Enfants*. Maternal virtues were specially prized and at one moment the nursing mother was adopted, as it were, by the caprice of fashion; suckling was perceived to be a noble diversion and the wet nurse, inscrutably enough, was hardly less esteemed than the mother; it was a moment to which Fragonard paid homage in

his *Visite à La Nourrice*. The prevailing affectibility preferred that passion should subsist on vows instead of kisses, and that coquetry should pass as the defensive arm of virtue ; but licentious living might seem to have a richer flavour amid the innuendoes of moral sensibility, and indelicacy obtrudes both in the paintings of Greuze and in Diderot's expositions of their moral purpose.

Nor was Fragonard deterred by his domestic contentment from the pursuit of erotic themes. If the subject of *Le Verrou* might be described as a betrayal of trustful innocence, it can only be understood as a tender capitulation ; and in *L'Instant désiré*, the artist transcends the ambiguity of fashion with a swift, dulcet gesture in which innocence and sensuality are more spontaneously united than even Paul and Virginie might have proved them to be. But it was in less amorous measures that his most compelling perceptions were at this time transposed. The spectacle of children tumbling about the studio, the country delights of his cottage at St. Germain, the practical qualities of his wife, whom he preferred to consider as 'la caissière,' these advantages of domesticity filled his spirit with an untutored serenity in which Diderot must have rejoiced. The presence in the household of Marguerite Gérard, the artist's sister-in-law, a black-eyed child whose beauty ripened as he watched her and whose winning ways, to his bemused perception, grew daily more indulgent, illumined the serenity of his mood with poetry. It was a poetry whose appealing accents were increasingly treasured by the ageing painter, and Marguerite Gérard's surviving letters prove, if not the poetry, at least the influence of the appeal. Fragonard taught her how to paint ; it was through his help that her career as an artist was founded, and in the warmth of the tender attachment she returned, his sensibilities preserved their mobility and youth. He was her 'Bon ami.' '... Mon cœur reconnaissant et sensible,' she writes, 'n'est heureux que quand il s'occupe de son ami.'—'Et quand mon ami me demande,' she declares elsewhere, with the same stilted pathos, 'que je lui ecrive quelquechose d'agréable, je ne connais qu'un sujet, c'est de lui que je parle. De lui parceque lui me parait le plus aimable des sujets.' The equivocal character of this romantic intimacy in the midst of a family, whose mutual affections seem otherwise to have been beyond reproach, sufficed for the inspiration of a group of pictures that were an impulsive, inevitable expression of the sentimental morality that less intuitive painters were labouring to include among their stock paraphernalia. For Fragonard, such subjects as *Le Contrat de Mariage*, *Le Petit Prédicateur* or even *Dites-donc : S'il vous plait* might appropriately have been included in the leaves of a family

album. They illustrate the 'innocent' events of a home that charmed and melted him. When he went in such a mood of ravishment to the country, the soliciting light was silvered by a tear; the rustic Fragonard with suffused eyes, the poet of the small group of exquisite 'paysanneries,' is a harmonist in tune with the author of the *Devin du Village*. The 'gamme d'amour,' in which these pastorals are set, flickers from terre-verte to silver, from ochre to vermilion; it is the fond irradiation of a honeyed thought—in *L'Écurie*, of the precocity of an infant Dephnis, or, in the unctuous *L'Etable*, of the returning herd whose majestic repose exhales the beatitude of the hour.

Painting of this kind, in which Rousseau might have admired the mirror of his own sensibilities, was revolutionary art. Fragonard's preoccupation with the simpler rural and domestic themes was a service to the cause of the Tiers-Etat, and his lyrical response to landscape might have taught the Romantics of a later generation. But the arts, habitually prophetic, embraced Imperialism as early as the revolutionary year II when David became Secretary to the Convention, and Fragonard survived as an amiable citizen whose professional qualifications were respected but whose imaginative liberties were despised. He acquiesced in the progress of events with a touching indifference. In 1789, Madame Fragonard was numbered among the twenty-two women who journeyed to Versailles to place their jewels at the disposal of the nation. They were dressed in white 'sans parure, sans faste, mais ornées de cette belle simplicité qui caractérise la vertu.' It would be imprudent to guess with how much good faith 'la caissière' made this sacrifice, or to what extent she may have been affected by the member of the Assembly who proposed that 'les traits adorables de ces citoyennes soient transmis à la postérité par le moyen du physionotrace.' Such charities, however, were not permitted to continue, and the revenue of pensioned artists was compulsorily reduced by two-thirds. The uncertain protection of David was the principal safeguard of Fragonard's security. But it proved to be reliable, and Fragonard was employed in responsible offices concerned with the organisation of the National Museum until in the year V he was forcibly retired. He preserved his resilient humour amid the stream of political change, and his untendentious disposition survived the disrepute into which his art, so delicately but deeply in debt to liberty and fraternity, had now sunk. But he was distressed by Napoleon's closure of the painters' lodgings in the Louvre where he had lived for so long, and was enraged on discovering that his ungifted son, one of the most successful of

David's pupils, had destroyed, as 'a holocaust to good taste,' his invaluable collection of drawings and engravings; and we may assume that he experienced sufficiently the bitterness of old age when Marguerite Gérard who had now risen, with his help, to a small pinnacle of fame, refused the request for a loan, which declining means and trust in her affection had induced him to address to her. She conveyed her refusal in terms of the most wounding superiority: '... Une coquette vante les plaisirs et la variété,' she wrote, 'Une femme laide, la constance; une vieille, la sagesse; un guerrier les beaux exploits. Nous devons vanter l'économie: cela tient lieu de fortune quand on est sage.' But such ill-usage appears to have failed to destroy the inner detachment that was his admirable defence against the difficulties of his last years, and it was in a period of tranquillity, in 1806, that an ice consumed too rapidly after his daily walk produced a congestion to which he immediately succumbed. As far as we know, he had for some years ceased to paint; the destroying wind of the Davidian dictatorship may well have snapped the pliant strings that had played so capriciously without ever quite forgetting the Petrarchan air that had first caressed them.

Photographic Supplement

John Martin

By Thomas Balston

John Martin

*Plates from a forthcoming biography,
JOHN MARTIN 1789-1854, by
Thomas Balston (Duckworth)*

The present stock-taking of English art, due perhaps to our comparative isolation from continental influences, has, none too soon, revived interest in Martin, who in his day, despite the hostility of the Academy, was recognised throughout Europe as a man of genius. Many, if not most, of his chief oil-paintings must have perished during his long eclipse, but some thirty have now been located, and there are many of his minor works (mezzotints, sepias and watercolours) in museums and private hands.

Plate 1, a chalk-drawing by his youngest son, shows him on his death-bed in the Isle of Man, still gazing intently at the sea and sky, though he could no longer speak or move his hands.

Plate 2, one of his 24 mezzotints to *Paradise Lost*, and *Plate 3*, the oil-painting recently bought by the Tate Gallery, show the opposite extremes of serenity and turbulence which inspired his most striking works.

Plates 2, 4, 5 and 7, all from *Paradise Lost*, give some idea of the wide imaginative range of this series of mezzotints.

Plate 6, one of a pair of sepias in the British Museum, shows his lively treatment of classical subjects. Many of them were drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but this one has not been identified.

Plate 8, also one of a pair of sepias in the British Museum, is the earliest example of his plans to embellish London. The arch, surmounted by a statue of Wellington and framing St. Pancras Church, spans the New (now Marylebone) Road from Portland Place to Regent's Park.



1. JOHN MARTIN. *By Chalres Martin.* ($23\frac{3}{4} \times 19$ in.) 1854.





3. THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH. (108 X 156 in.) 1853.

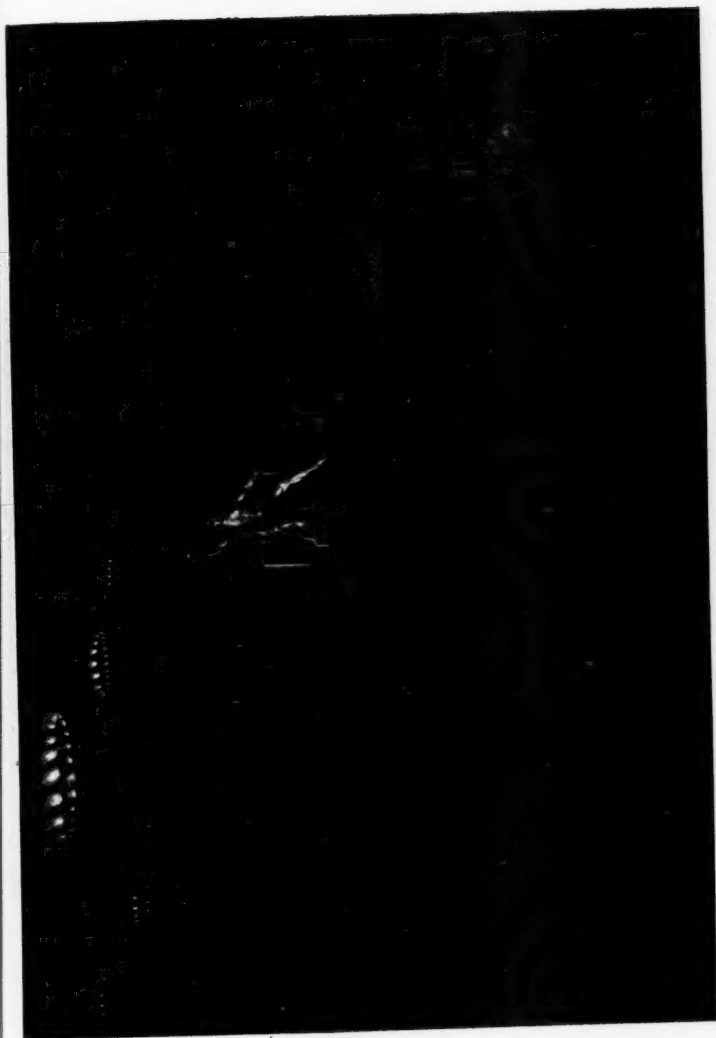




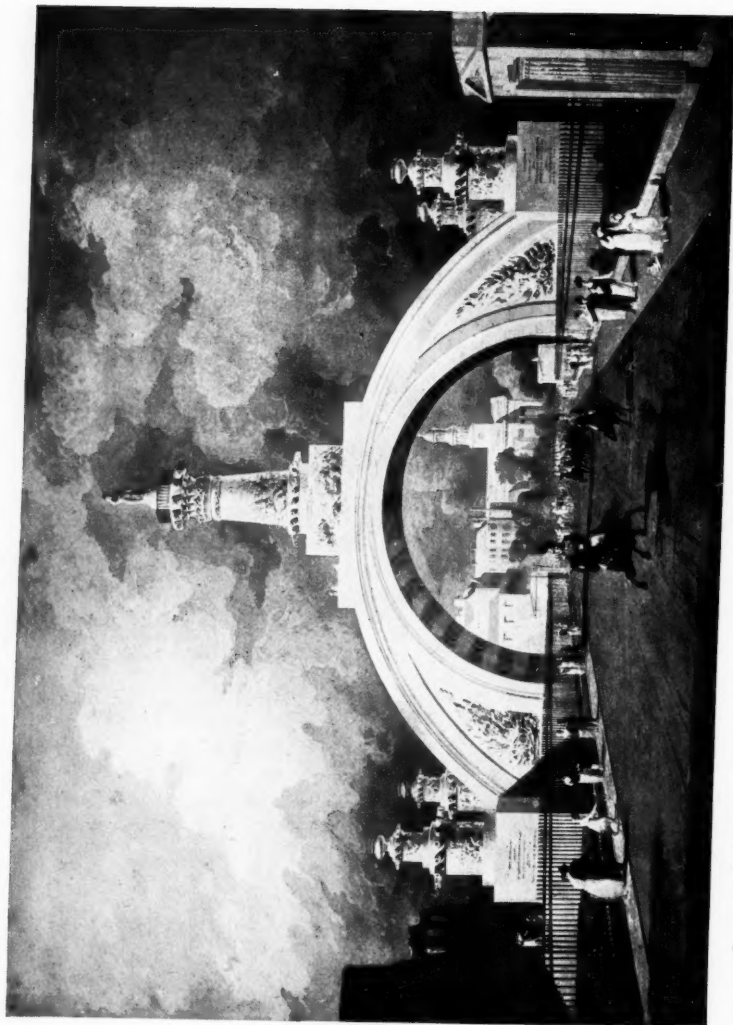
5. ADAM AND EVE DRIVEN OUT OF PARADISE. ($7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$ in.) 1827



6. LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES. (21 X 101 in.) n.d.



7. SATAN PRESIDING AT THE INFERNAL COUNCIL. (7 1/8 X 11 in.) 1824.



8. PROPOSED TRIUMPHAL ARCH ACROSS THE NEW ROAD. ($13\frac{5}{8} \times 19\frac{1}{8}$ in.) 1820.

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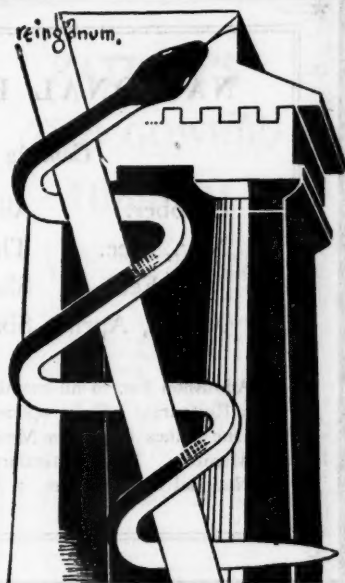
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